

Situation and Disposition: Who Radicalizes and How?

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Chapter 1:

Introduction

We do not normally view violence as a part of civic political behavior. However, for the third consecutive year, the risk of political violence worldwide increased in 2018 (Aon, 2018). Compared to earlier years, the number of terrorist incidents rose in Western Europe and North America (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2018), in particular due to the increased activity of right-wing extremists. Mass public protests that turn violent are no longer rare phenomena in liberal democracies. In France in the spring of 2019, the “yellow vest” movement and the state’s response to it had caused at least eleven deaths and several thousand injuries in clashes between police and protesters (France24, 2019). In the UK, reported hate crimes rose by 60 percent after the referendum to exit the European Union in 2015 (BBC, 2016). In North America, the number of violent incidents in 2017 was thrice that of 2012 (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2018).

A puzzling observation is that while it is apparent that the issue of political violence is growing in importance, it is unclear how or whether different instances are connected. The rise in violence originates from what appear on the surface to be vastly different motives, including religious extremism, ethno-nationalism, left-wing ideology, and single-issue extremism. What makes people from all levels of socioeconomic, ideological, and ethnic backgrounds cross the boundary of established political order to engage in political violence?

One answer to this question looks at macro-level changes that include a weakened liberal democratic world order (Aon, 2018) and weaker liberal institutions (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2018). For the thirteenth consecutive year, 2018 saw a decline in global freedom, a decline that included countries in North America and Europe (Freedom House, 2019). In their 2019 report, *Democracy in Retreat*, Freedom House connects this decline with an increase in aggressive political rhetoric and insinuations that violence against media and political opponents is legitimate, often originating with nationalist populist political candidates. Despite the intuitive attraction of such an explanation, it does not tell us *how* such macro-level changes drive individuals to political violence, or how such changes impact ordinary individuals.

Furthermore, despite these macro-level changes that influence millions of people, the fact remains that most people never engage in any form of violent protest. In the United States, for example, the aftermath of the election of the 45th president saw a resurgence of *peaceful* political protest, which only rarely spilled over into illegal methods or violence (Chenoweth & Pressman, 2018).

Why some—apparently ordinary—people accept the use of or themselves engage in violence while others do not is puzzling. In this doctoral dissertation, which is comprised of six papers and the present summary, I suggest that to solve this puzzle of political violence, we must take a step back from specific incidents and their content to focus on that which we all share: our political psychology. Only in investigating the general psychological mechanisms that animate people to protest and engage in political behavior can we understand why ordinary people would come to support and even consider engaging in political violence. Only that way can we attempt to dissuade them from doing so.

In this summary report, therefore, I argue that to understand and explain political violence, we need to shift our focus from the specifics of each occurrence to ask the research question:

What situational and dispositional factors cause ordinary citizens to support and engage in political violence?

Below, I provide an overview of the research undertaken to answer my research question, and the structure of this summary report.

1.1. An overview

This summary report binds together my PhD dissertation *Situation And Disposition: A Political Psychology of Violent Protest*. The dissertation is the conclusion of a PhD project conducted at the Department of Political Science, Aarhus University. The summary presents the dissertation's foundational elements and the specific research carried out and aims to tie together the individual papers. It also seeks to stimulate further discussion by considering the implications of the dissertation.

In order to answer the research question, I engage with the scholarly literature on political violence and the pathways that lead to it. I find that by relinquishing the focus on the ideographic circumstances that surround each instance of violence, we can construct an integrative psychological framework of factors mentioned across a range of theoretical approaches. Such a framework opens up for otherwise underutilized research designs that allow tests of the causal role of each factor. Table 1 provides an overview of the six papers. Detailed walkthroughs of arguments, methods, measurements, and analyses are contained in each paper.

Paper A is a review of the current empirical literature on radicalization. The paper finds that most approaches indicate a handful of factors centered around individual dispositions, social identities, uncertainty or flux, and dark

narratives that legitimize violence. Paper B shows how, in two nationally representative samples, the trait of openness moderates the relationship between experiences of financial and health-related uncertainty and support for violence. Papers C and D apply experimental designs to study the situational factors of dark world perceptions and uncertainty on behavioral intentions to engage in violence and support political violence as legitimate and effective. Paper E shows that strong partisanship is causally related to extreme intergroup action, and that the relationship is stronger for individuals with high levels of the dark triad personality traits. Finally, Paper F proceeds from these and related findings by other authors to argue that radicalization should not be understood as an entirely “normal” nor entirely “pathological” political and psychological process, but that a focus on subclinical disorders is warranted.

This summary proceeds as follows. In Chapter 2, I review the existing literature on the political psychology of radicalization, with a critical focus on generalizability and causality. Chapter 3 uses the review as a starting point for the theoretical argument that we must focus on the interplay between dispositional and situational factors in understanding the mechanisms of radicalization to political violence. In Chapter 4, I argue that we have come a long way using qualitative studies and studies with a small number of individuals, but that other methods are required to investigate the questions raised in Chapter 3. The chapter discusses the value of experimental designs and quantitative analysis and the advantages and limitations of this approach. Chapter 5 presents the main findings from the empirical studies embedded in Papers B through E. In Chapter 6, I summarize the findings as they relate to the theoretical model, and consider implications for future research and practice.

I conclude by asserting that my research illustrates how we can understand the dispositional and situational factors that drive political violence through the three pillars of individual dispositions, situational influences, and their interplay. A personality structure characterized by interpersonal hostility, unfriendliness, closed-mindedness, and a callous lack of empathy disposes one to embrace violence. Environments that create situations for inducing uncertainty related to one’s sense of self and place in the world and offer strong parochial political groups for partisan identities have a similar effect. Dark narratives that legitimize violence co-occur with, but do not necessarily drive, violence. Connecting the factors are interactions of disposition and situation. On the one hand, a disposition of openness to new experiences and abstract ideas seems to shield individuals from the negative effects of uncertainty. On the other hand, interpersonal callousness and manipulation magnify the effect of relying on a strong partisan identity on political violence.

On a macro level, this work implies that continuing growth in inequality in access to education, healthcare, and the job market; new platforms with

which to provide propagandistic narratives and closed social identities; mistrust of the global economic order; and nationalist populist movements work through the factors mentioned above to increase the risk of future violence. Since interventions against these macro-level changes are difficult, specific policies for vulnerable populations should target the factors identified in this work. In particular, interventions that reduce uncertainty and anxiety, offer positive social identities, and work to reduce polarization can dampen the driving forces of violence and enable an increase in peaceful activism. On a meso-analytical level, I conclude that the way forward lies in ever-stronger co-operation between those institutions that aim to reduce political violence in society.

Table 1. Overview of papers in this dissertation

Paper	Author(s), title, and publication information
A	Gøtzsche-Astrup, O. (2018). The time for causal designs: Review and evaluation of empirical support for mechanisms of political radicalisation. <i>Aggression and Violent Behavior</i> , 39, 90-99.
B	Gøtzsche-Astrup, O. (2019). Personality moderates the relationship between uncertainty and political violence: Evidence from two large US samples. <i>Personality and Individual Differences</i> , 139, 102-109.
C	Gøtzsche-Astrup, O. Pathways to violence: Do uncertainty and dark world perceptions increase intentions to engage in political violence? <i>Under review</i> .
D	Gøtzsche-Astrup, O. & Lindekilde, L. Self-uncertainty, dark mindsets and dark personalities on campus: precursors of support for political violence among college students. <i>Under review</i> .
E	Gøtzsche-Astrup, O. The edge of violence: strong social identities and dark personalities drive U.S. partisan's intentions to engage in collective political violence. <i>Working paper</i> .
F	Gøtzsche-Astrup, O. & Lindekilde, L (2019), Either or? Reconciling Findings on Mental Health and Extremism using a Dimensional Rather than Categorical Paradigm. <i>Journal of Forensic Sciences</i> , 64, 982-988.

Note: Papers' identifying letters are used throughout this summary.

Chapter 2: Extant Literature

The obvious first place to turn for an answer to the question of the situational and dispositional factors that cause ordinary citizens to support and engage in political violence is the existing literature. In this chapter, therefore, I present an overview of extant theoretical work on the political psychology of radicalization. The scholarly literature in this area is in a peculiar position, because the proportion of published articles that present original empirical work is small compared to theoretical papers and literature reviews (Silke & Schmidt-Petersen, 2017). To proceed from this state of affairs, I argue that we should refocus the research agenda on the empirical world. To do this, we must first systematically reassess the literature with a focus on empirical studies. This chapter lays the foundation for my main argument in this summary by showing how the theoretical field is relatively saturated and how purportedly different theories point to semantically distinct concepts that are nevertheless empirically indistinguishable from each other. I argue that a foray into a quantitative agenda is warranted, and that current research should focus on empirical investigation in a holistic theoretical framework. I begin this chapter by justifying the need for another review (Section 2.1) and by discussing the search parameters used (Section 2.2). From there, I present the six main approaches distilled from the literature search, with a focus on the commonalities of each (Section 2.3), and show how a restructuring of factors into three overarching domains can be the lens that helps focus our research agenda (Section 2.4). Finally, I end the chapter by summarizing the findings, and by paving the way to the theoretical argument and holistic model in Chapter 3. This chapter draws from the literature review in Paper A.

2.1. Justification for another review and a history of the field

Historically, the study of political violence is a field swayed by violent events that occupy the political agenda. A first distinction, made in both politics and research, is between the post-war period before the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 and the current period. In terms of politics, the focus of the post-war period was on separatist and geopolitically motivated violence, with research disciplines focusing more or less on their own specific areas. Scholars within psychiatry and psychoanalytic psychology, for example, focused on explaining violence as mental illness or psychopathology (Corner & Gill, 2015),

whereas sociologists developed theories of how broader social movements can evolve to apply violent tactics to reach their goals (Della Porta, 2008). The Troubles in the British Isles and the ETA on the Iberian Peninsula are examples of important broader social movements that included violence in their repertoire.

The al-Qaeda attacks in New York and the Pentagon in 2001 had a dual effect on research. First, political attention turned towards Islamic terrorism and the Middle East and south-central Asia. Two prolonged wars in this region created an influx of research funding on political violence as terrorism (Kundnani, 2012). Second, in this period, “ideology” and “fanaticism” became keys to explaining political violence, even if this fanaticism was sometimes seen as inherently unfathomable (Laqueur, 1999). It is difficult to theorize the processes that lead to political violence from this perspective. In the late 00s, the pendulum of political and research attention turned back towards the process through which people come to engage in political violence (Sedgwick, 2010). This was in large part due to the 2004 and 2007 attacks in London and Barcelona, which were committed by individuals who had been radicalized while living in liberal democratic societies.

In the current decade, political attention has fragmented into a multitude of foci, such as a renewed focus on lone actor extremism (Gill, Horgan, & Deckert, 2014), foreign fighters (Borum & Fein, 2017), and revitalized right-wing violence and anti-globalization rioting (Piazza, 2017). With research funding continuing to flow, the field is as sprawling as ever, with a range of specialized journals publishing a host of articles (McCauley & Moskalenko, 2017).

One issue with this research, however, is its reliance on secondary data and theoretical reviews. One reason for this may be the influx of new researchers to the field after 2001 coupled with the difficulties in acquiring primary empirical material relevant to the phenomena under study. A decade ago, Silke (2008) lamented the fact that only twenty percent of published papers on radicalization used primary sources, and that much empirical work relied on pre-experimental research designs. These designs fail to enable a discussion of actual causes of political violence as opposed to simply co-occurring factors. I believe the path out of this impasse is a focus on empirical studies and innovative approaches to data collection.

If this assessment of the situation is correct, the attentive reader should question the need for yet another review. However, a decade on, a number of approaches to the psychology of political violence have emerged that base hypothetical predictions in empirics, and the reliance on secondary sources has decreased (Horgan, 2016; Schuurman, 2018). From the reliance on case stud-

ies and pre-experimental designs, the newer approaches often use quantitative methods with a large number of individuals, indicating that distinguishing drivers from co-occurring factors may now be possible. While the number of published review papers has not diminished, there is now a body of empirically informed theories. The target for my 2018 review (Paper A) was to evaluate these theories on the basis of their empirical evidence. The explicit assumption for the justification of another review was that the literature had moved on since Silke's 2008 criticism. Furthermore, I expected that solutions to the problem of access to data would reveal new ways of studying the political psychology of violence. In the following section I present the original research strategy applied in Paper A, which I supplement with recent work.

2.2. Method

I first identified relevant journals and reviewed them for central theoretical approaches. The six selected journals were *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, *Political Psychology*, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, and *Aggressive Behavior*. These journals represent general political science and psychology journals as well as specialized journals that focus specifically on political violence. As the history above makes clear, the field has only recently come into its own in terms of empirical studies. Therefore, I selected distinct theories for inclusion only if they had been applied in empirical studies after 2012, if they aimed at explaining general pathways towards political violence, and if they discussed individual-level mechanisms. While this first step was fruitful in terms of identifying distinct approaches, it was not systematic, and risked missing important work.

Therefore, I carried out a systematic review of the literature to complement the first step. Using the ProQuest platform, I identified four relevant databases: PsycINFO, PsycArticles, Worldwide Political Science Abstracts, and Research Library: Social Sciences. I restricted the search to peer-reviewed papers published since 2013, using five Boolean operators to specify the search string ("radical*", "psycholog*", "mechanism*", "violen*", "politic*"). The systematic search resulted in 1280 articles, which I screened and included based on the criteria used in the first step.

To gain an overview of the field, I categorized the resulting papers from this two-step process into the six broad theoretical approaches judged to be most influential. I summarize these in the next section by drawing on Paper A of the dissertation, supplemented by a new search for papers citing these frameworks published since 2018. This does not constitute a systematic update to my review, as that would be premature.

2.3. The six theories

I describe the six theories below by providing a short overview of their explanations of the mechanism through which individuals come to view political violence as a viable behavior. I then summarize the quality of the empirical evidence in support of each approach, with a focus on work published after my review article (Paper A). Paper A goes into more detail with the evidence for each approach. The first three approaches focus on identity and are social psychological. The last three approaches have less impressive empirical bases, but touch on factors that the other theories do not, such as individual differences and mental health issues.

2.3.1. Uncertainty-identity theory

This body of work begins with the observation that overall, we should think of our self-concept—the way that we understand ourselves—as compartmentalized into a range of real and imagined selves rather than as a monolith of one clear self-concept (Hogg, Abrams, & Brewer, 2017). In addition to individual elements of the self, the different groups that we belong to are represented in the self-concept. According to social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), when the individual elements of the self come under threat, we seek refuge in our group memberships and emphasize our social identities. For the study of intergroup hostility in general, and political violence in particular, uncertainty-identity theory is relevant (Hog, 2014). It builds on the social identity theory of the group, and holds that pervasive uncertainty regarding people's selves, their place in the world, and their future can be reduced by identifying with strongly defined groups. In turn, this identification increases people's willingness to take extreme action to defend their group. Proponents of this theory argue that these processes illustrate a prominent path to violent extremism (Goldman & Hogg, 2016).

In a range of settings in the laboratory and in the population as a whole, uncertainty has been tied to a preference for a dominant and prototypical leader, for more extreme student activism groups, and to more hostile intergroup behavior (Brewer & Pierce, 2005; Hogg, Kruglanski, & Bos, 2013; Hogg & Adelman, 2013; Rast, Hogg, & Giessner, 2013). In a recent study, participants who were ostracized from one social group experienced an increase in uncertainty, and became more open to gang membership (Hales & Williams, 2018). While this approach has a diverse and large number of experimental studies to back it up, a serious limitation is the lack of focus on actual engagement in violence.

2.3.2. Quest for significance

In Kruglanski and colleagues' (2014) significance quest approach, radicalization to political violence is a specific outcome of a more general process of radicalization to extremism. An experienced actual or threatened loss of significance, a sense of *mattering* in the world, triggers the process of restoring or protecting one's significance. The pathway that leads to violence involves the adoption of a quest for reaching personal significance by achieving a *political* goal, an *ideological* component that identifies the means to reach that goal, and a social *network* that facilitates the process.

While the process described in the quest for significance theory is general, political violence emerges as an acceptable means to significance only when the political goal becomes *monolithic*. A monolithic goal describes a situation where other competing values, such as intergroup deliberating or norms that bar violence, disappear. For that to happen, a rigid collective belief system that justifies violence by identifying a grievance and a culprit needs to be present and to dominate group thinking.

Both quantitative and qualitative studies provide empirical evidence for the significance quest approach. Interviews and observation studies with violent extremist groups have shown a link between a perceived loss of significance, a motivation for restoration of significance, and justification of political violence as a means to achieve it (Webber & Kruglanski, 2018). In the review paper, I concluded that while the evidence for the external and measurement validity of the approach were robust, experimental studies were required to improve internal validity. A recent paper using experimental studies of non-extremist American participants has established a causal connection between loss of significance and support for extremist ideologies, mediated by individuals' search for psychological certainty (Webber et al., 2018). This study shores up an otherwise weak point of the approach, namely its internal validity.

2.3.3. The devoted actor

The devoted actor is a deontic actor that seeks a particular goal with no heed to instrumental calculations of risk and reward (Atran, 2016). The devoted actor approach brings together the concepts of identity fusion and sacred values to explain why people engage in political violence. In identity fusion (Swann et al., 2014), individuals come to experience a sense of oneness with a social group, a fusing of the individual and the group selves similar to the extreme reliance on one's social identity that forms the basis of uncertainty-identity's explanation of political violence. When this fusion is coupled with the ideolog-

ical element of nonnegotiable sacred values, extreme self-sacrifice and political violence become possible. This process purportedly rests on an evolved mechanism that has provided a competitive advantage to under-powered political groups in human evolutionary history (Atran, 2016).

Field experiments with violent extremists in the Middle East (Ginges & Atran, 2011), population samples in North Africa and Spain (Sheikh, Gómez, & Atran, 2016), and qualitative studies (Putra & Sukabdi, 2014; Rüdig & Kar-yotis, 2014) provide empirical evidence for the causal connection between sacred values and extreme action. Recently, direct evidence for the relationship between identity fusion and support for violent intergroup action, even in majority groups in democratic societies, has been established (Kunst et al., 2018), providing further empirical support for this approach.

2.3.4. Mindset and worldview

Whereas the uncertainty-identity, significance quest, and devoted actor theories offer narrow causal pathways to political violence, other approaches attempt to integrate different factors. In the mindset/worldview approach (Borum, 2014), the idea is that a *mindset*—a set of psychological traits and characteristics—merges with an extreme worldview to cause individuals to engage in violence. A vulnerable mindset can come from a need for meaning, high uncertainty or lack of belonging, and be pushed along by a need for status and revenge for perceived slights (Borum & Fein, 2017). Individual traits such as impulsivity, aggression, and poor self-regulation are risk factors in creating vulnerability.

The combination of the risk factors creating this mindset and a dogmatic, fundamentalist authoritarian worldview or extreme ideology facilitates engagement in political violence. Despite this pairing of mindset and worldview, which mirrors the other models' assertions of identity and ideology factors and draws in individual difference factors, there is a lack of high-quality empirical testing of this approach.

2.3.5. Reactive approach motivation

The reactive approach motivation framework is in some ways similar to the mindset/worldview approach. Here, a complex interaction between personality traits, perceived threats, and group pressures lead to radicalization and violent extremism (McGregor, Hayes, & Prentice, 2015). Uncertainty, loss of control, and goal frustration, which resemble self-uncertainty and significance loss, are thought to be anxiety-related motivational states that drive extreme compensatory reactions. Personality structures characterized as oppositional,

anxious, or identity-weak may help to facilitate this state (McGregor et al., 2008).

A recent paper (Xu & McGregor, 2018) grounds this reactive approach motivation empirically. It reports experiments that show how threats to core values and goals cause a worldview defense reaction through increased anxiety, and that this reaction is conditioned by the personality factor of neuroticism. Other studies provide support for the anxiety-to-approach link (Jonas et al., 2014), and anxiety-to-radicalism link, although effects are generally small (Bhui, Everitt, & Jones, 2014; Bhui, Warfa, & Jones, 2014). This approach provides a holistic approach to violent extremism, and shows a limitation of several of the other approaches: By stressing general motivational and group processes, we risk glossing over important individual differences to create an oversimplified model of radicalization to political violence.

2.3.6. The two-pyramids model

Finally, the two-pyramids model is less a causal model of radicalization than an empirically based call to distinguish between the pathways that lead to extreme opinion (that violence is legitimate) and extreme action (actually engaging in violence). Furthermore, it stresses that we must distinguish engagement in activism from engagement in violence, rather than seeing violence as a radicalization of activism (McCauley & Moskalenko, 2017). Attitudes towards a certain action and actually carrying out that action are not identical, and although most political violence relies on a broader base of support, its supporters are not necessarily more likely to be the ones to engage in violence than others. Because of this, we should distinguish between the factors that lead to a radicalization of opinion from those that lead to radicalization of action. While this point is important and holds intuitive sway, I was able to identify no studies that tested this directly.

Nevertheless, the distinction between activism and peaceful protest and engagement in violent protest is supported by empirical research (McCauley & Moskalenko, 2017; McCauley, 2013). For example, Thomas and Louis (2014) showed that acceptance of violent methods relies on de-legitimization of non-violent ones, indicating separate dimensions. Another study (Thomas, McGarty, & Louis, 2014) supported the view that political activism and violence are separate, and that increased activism does not necessarily increase the risk of violence.

2.4. Three domains of factors

The six approaches reviewed in Section 2.3 represent distinct research agendas, with different concepts suggested as drivers of radicalization to political

violence. From one perspective, the theories are competing to explain the same phenomenon. In this perspective, a relevant question is whether it is identity fusion or a shift to a reliance on a monolithic social identity that explains the social shift towards extreme groups; or whether loss of significance, thwarting of sacred values, or increased self-uncertainty motivates engagement in extreme action. I believe a more promising perspective is to view these approaches as complementary in pointing to factors and mechanisms that lead to violence. In that sense, the mindset/worldview and reactive approach motivation theories are relevant because they point to a holistic framework of factors to be empirically investigated.

In this section, I integrate the literature above by distinguishing between its implications for how we should study our outcome of interest, what situational factors are particularly potent in driving individuals to violence, and which individual difference or dispositional factors the literature indicates. This section distills the points of each theory into three common domains: outcome, situation, and disposition.

2.4.1. Outcome

While the literature review revealed a large body of empirical studies on the psychological processes leading to political violence, the operationalizations of the outcome varied greatly. These ranged from preferences for a radical student group (Hogg, 2014) and justifying political violence (Webber & Kruglanski, 2018) to intentions to engage in violence oneself (Kunst et al., 2018). A disentangling of the outcome of interest seems needed. The two-pyramid model provides a way to do this by distinguishing attitudes from behavior and activism from radical violence (McCauley & Moskalenko, 2017; Moskalenko & McCauley, 2009). My focus in this summary is the intersection of behavior (rather than attitudes) and violence (rather than activism), in the interest of answering the research question on the mechanisms of political violence. The other quadrants, consisting of violent attitudes, activist behavior, and activist attitudes, are nevertheless relevant for investigating the specificity of relevant factors. For example, a strong social identity may increase the probability of accepting not just extreme and violent political protest, but also activist behavior.

Despite the differences in empirical backing, the six approaches all attempt to explain a common phenomenon of engaging in violent behavior in hostile political interactions. I do not wish to imply that political violence is a homogeneous category. There are important differences in tactic, targets, justification, and consequences of the violence. However, this dissertation focuses on the things that are common to the category, not what distinguishes

one type of political violence from another. All the approaches remain relevant to this dissertation. However, the approaches differ in the degree that they focus on drivers that vary across situations or across individuals. These differences, I argue, are overshadowed by strong similarities, and point to areas with a lack of research rather than incommensurable theoretical differences.

2.4.2. Situational

A first similarity is a focus on events in the environment that trigger the radicalization process. We may understand these negative life experiences broadly as *negative trigger events*, as they facilitate the processes that end in violence. In any particular case, negative trigger events could include severe discrimination, serious illness or job loss, or a sudden breakup of an important social relationship—any event that creates a critical decoupling of the individual from his or her embeddedness in their own life. Although the other processes identified in the literature, such as small-group dynamics and shifts in social identity or radical ideology, can be said to be more proximate causes of political violence, they rely on negative events as catalysts (Borum, 2014). Subjectively experienced self-conceptual uncertainty seems to be common to these trigger events. This disembeddedness can then create an opening for extreme political groups to offer reintegration into a new identity by offering a substitute for one's previous life (Hunter et al., 2017).

In this reintegration, the literature above points to the importance of social networks and small-group dynamics. In uncertainty-identity theory, small-group dynamics are directly involved in the *risky shift* to more extreme norms (Goldman & Hogg, 2016). In the significance quest approach, social networks are central, and in the devoted actor approach, the choice of using violence is predominantly a group decision (Atran, 2016). These processes mirror the finding that deliberation in small groups of like-minded individuals leads to more extreme views (Isenberg, 1986), and likely work through outgroup dehumanization (Bruneau & Kteily, 2017) and emotional resonance such as increased anger, contempt, and anxiety (Hogg, Meehan & Farquharson, 2010).

While social networks determine the availability of extreme groups to an extent, perceived and actual criteria for membership determine the relevance of the groups for the individual. *Self and social identity* is the central factor in this part of the process. Although the theories reviewed above focus on *general* social identity, research in political psychology has shown that the concept of a political or partisan social identity can be a factor in radicalization (Bougher, 2017; Rogowski & Sutherland, 2016). In the first three approaches (uncertainty-identity, significance quest, and devoted actor), we find the notion of a shift from an individualized sense of self to a social or fused sense of

overlap between the self and the social group. There are differences in how this factor is conceptualized. For example, uncertainty-identity theory rests on the cognitive self-categorization theory of social identity, whereas the devoted actor theory takes identity fusion theory's feeling of oneness with the group as the central factor. In any one real case, however, these processes are likely to co-occur. That is, the feeling of fused oneness with a group occurs in tandem with the cognitive self-categorization of identification with the social group.

The situational explanation suggests that radicalization to political violence begins with a negative triggering event and proceeds through group dynamics and social identity shifts to groups made available through the actor's social network. However, a central aspect is lacking from this explanation: a legitimizing ideology. This factor has been controversial both in terms of its causal power and for bundling broad narratives, religious extremes, strong group norms, sacredly held values, and worldviews (Webber & Kruglanski, 2018; McGregor, Hayes, & Prentice, 2015; Hogg & Adelman, 2013; Atran, 2016; Borum, 2014; Doosje, Loseman, & Bos, 2013). However, understood broadly and from the perspective of general factors that facilitate political violence, existing research points to a legitimizing ideology as a necessary but not sufficient factor. In that regard, no one specific ideological position can drive violence on its own. While religion can facilitate violence (when the other facilitating factors are present), so can national myths or secular group narratives (Atran, 2016).

A focus on these situational factors can give the impression that everyone is one negative trigger event, available social group, and legitimizing narrative away from engaging in violence. However, this is evidently not the case. In an innovative study, Baez and colleagues (2017) compared convicted terrorists to a socio-demographically matched control and non-politically motivated murderers. They concluded that ideological justification was not necessary to judge violence to be legitimate. Furthermore, the convicted terrorists were more similar in their moral reasoning about bodily harm to the murderers than the matched controls. These observations indicate that another realm of factors is relevant in explaining violence, a realm captured under the heading of individual differences.

2.4.3. Individual differences

A discussion of what the individual brings to the violent act, as opposed to the situational pressures outlined above, should start with a consideration of *normality and mental illness*. In the popular consciousness, mental disorders such as antisocial personality disorder or impulse control disorders are go-to

explanations of violent political events (Corner & Gill, 2015). The general theories reviewed above, however, unanimously assert that normal psychological mechanisms rather than disordered mechanisms explain radicalization to political violence. Furthermore, asserting a causal role for mental illness risks essentializing people who engage in violence as “crazy,” hindering other explanations.

Despite this agreement, some empirical studies have found an overrepresentation of mental illness among the subgroup of people who engage in political violence on their own: the so-called lone actors (Corner & Gill, 2017). One response to this finding could be to write it off as a categorically different process than the one that group-based actors go through. However, group processes seem to also play a role for lone actors, although often a more ambivalent one than for group-based actors (Lindekilde, O’Connor, & Schuurman, 2019). Paper F contains a more detailed discussion of this perspective. For the overall research question of this summary, we can conclude that the literature indicates that normal psychological mechanisms always play a role, and that mental illness plays a role only in a subcategory of political violence.

The indication in the literature is that our focus ought to be on normal individual differences, and mentions a range of potentially relevant factors. Trait anxiety, aggression, and authoritarianism, youth, and being male are thought to be risk factors (Doosje, Loseman & Bos, 2013; Kalmoe, 2014; Thomas & Bond, 2015). Social dominance orientation has also been linked to support for political violence (Henry et al., 2005; Thomsen et al., 2014), as has trait aggression. While a large body of work exists that examines individual differences in the propensity to engage in political protest, only a few studies focus on political violence (Veccione et al., 2015).

The lack of integration of the findings concerning individual differences into the theories that focus on factors in the social environment is problematic for answering the research question. I suggest that the way to achieve this integration is to combine a general framework of individual differences with a model of political behavior to overcome the traditional schism between environment and disposition. I develop this argument in the next chapter. An important conclusion from the literature is that no single personality profile or set of dispositions can explain political violence (Horgan, 2016), although specific factors may increase or decrease resilience and vulnerability to the environmental elements described above.

2.5. Summary: The state of the literature

The literature review of psychological mechanisms for political violence confirmed the expectation that the field that has moved towards empirical studies

during the past decade. I have argued that negative trigger events disembed individuals from their everyday existence and create a sense of self-related uncertainty and loss of meaning or significance in their lives. This flux can cause the individual to re-embed into a new, more extreme group through social networks. Shifts in social identity towards a reliance or feeling of fusion with the new group, combined with a legitimizing narrative or ideology, then cause the individual to see political violence as a viable action alternative. The frustration of perceived sacred values can induce a violent reaction outside instrumental calculations of risk and reward in this latter part of the process.

Furthermore, there are individual differences in how individuals cope with each element in this process. Mental illness plays a role in a subset of cases, but normal psychological mechanisms carry explanatory weight in all cases. These should be integrated into a comprehensive model of political violence. A psychological mindset of authoritarianism and dogmatism, as well as traits such as anxiety, aggression, and impulsivity, facilitate political violence. The theories appear somewhat disjointed from each other, however. It is unclear what the relative roles of situational and dispositional factors are, how they interact with each other, and if they are drivers or merely correlates of violence. While there is now a body of literature that focuses on exhuming correlations between these factors and violence, many of these studies focus on distant proxies for violence, such as support for a radical group or political hostility. Conceptually and empirically, we must distinguish attitudes from behavior, and non-violent activism and protest from political violence.

In this chapter, I have aimed to provide an overview of the existing literature on the question of individual mechanisms of political violence. The review has not drawn upon older approaches, nor on macro-level studies of political violence, for example studies on the causes of civil wars from other disciplines. This is not because the factors that such studies point towards are irrelevant, but rather that they create the backdrop for the individual's engagement or disengagement from violence rather than the proximate cause. In the next chapter, I integrate the relevant explanations through a holistic model that combines situational and dispositional factors. Finally, I present the integrative model that is necessary for moving ahead with large empirical studies that can adjudicate between factors.

Chapter 3: The Theoretical Argument

This chapter uses the literature review as a foundation for presenting a holistic model of the interplay between disposition and situation in radicalization. I draw on the theoretical sections in Papers A-E, and take up a broader discussion about the role of dispositional and situational factors in political science and psychology, and in the social sciences in general.

The previous chapter ended with a call for an integrative approach to empirical research on radicalization. In this chapter, I theorize and present such an approach. The second chapter concluded that in order to understand the mechanisms through which people come to engage in political violence, we must keep our focus on the situational factors as well as the factors within the individual that influence behavior.

In spite of this conclusion, the six approaches that were identified by the systematic review did not reveal an adequate way of integrating these factors. Therefore, if the conclusion from the previous chapter holds, we ought to broaden our discussion to look for a model of how attitudes and behavior emerge from dispositional and situational factors. In order to do that, we ought to also broaden our theoretical perspective to include work on aggression, political protest broadly understood, and personality and political behavior. The next sections (3.1 and 3.2) develop the findings from the situational and dispositional categories of the review to develop integrative approaches to each domain. Section 3.3 conceptualizes political violence. In Sections 3.4 and 3.5, I proceed to discuss a way to combine these two domains in an overarching framework, and the implications for research.

3.1. Situational factors: Uncertainty, partisan identity and dark world perceptions

First, let us revisit the findings regarding the situational influences that the literature indicated as drivers of political violence at the level of the individual. Chapter 2 revealed several evidence-based social psychological approaches to engagement in political violence, but also a range of conceptually overlapping factors. In order to combine these in a holistic model of radicalization, we may distinguish three elements in this domain. First, the literature indicated that the process is often triggered by one of a broad range of negative events that disembody individuals from their lives. Second comes the broad impact of social dynamics and social identities that increase intergroup hostility and break

down norms that prohibit violence. The third element is the role of a legitimizing narrative, ideology, or worldview that points to violence as the best and only solution to solve political conflict. In the following subsections, these elements are taken up in turn, as I attempt to conceptualize important factors to represent each element.

3.1.1. Uncertainty

I theorized that negative trigger events are the initial driver on the road to violence. These events could take many forms, and were defined more in terms of their consequences—as events that create a break in everyday life—than they were in terms of specific instances or events. For example, discrimination from other groups in society, severe illness or death in the family, losing one's job, or going through a divorce are all examples of experiences that have happened to individuals who later engaged in violence (Gill, Horgan, & Deckert, 2014). At the level of the observer, it may be difficult to identify the commonalities between these events. At the level of the individual that experience these events, conversely, the events share the element of disembedding them from their daily lives. I argue that we can move one step closer to the psychological reality of this disembeddedness, or lifting out, by focusing on the concept of uncertainty.

Uncertainty crops up in several theories of political violence, as seen in the previous chapter, but also in other theories of social and political unrest. For example, early studies of the relationship between economic and political instability and violence (Muller 1985; Wang et al. 1993) as well as newer studies of political protest (Lee 2016; Shadmehr 2014) mention uncertainty as a key factor. Furthermore, there is support in the literature for asserting that uncertainty captures the effect of the negative trigger events. In a recent study, Kakkar and Sivanathan (2017) related macroeconomic uncertainty in respondents' zip codes—operationalized by aggregating unemployment, housing vacancy, and poverty rate—to support for a dominant, rather than a prestigious, leader. Using data from 138,323 individuals across 69 countries from the World Values Survey and the World Development Indicators, they replicated this relationship using individual-level indicators of uncertainty. I take a similar approach in studying uncertainty and personality in Paper B, as I describe in Chapter 4 of this summary.

In the uncertainty-identity theory of extremism, focus is on uncertainty specific to the self concept. This type of self-uncertainty or identity-uncertainty is conceptualized as uncertainty concerning one's self, place in the world, and future (Hogg & Adelman, 2016). It relates to the decision to engage in violence on behalf of one's group, although my review indicated that we still

lack evidence for this link. In the significance quest approach, uncertainty is also mentioned, as it is a central effect of significance loss and loss of meaning (Kruglanski et al., 2014). It resembles the disembeddedness effect of the negative trigger events as conceptualized here.

I believe uncertainty is the most promising conceptualization of a general psychological effect of the negative trigger events. There are at least three reasons for this. First, the uncertainty construct straddles the gap between different approaches—both those identified in the review and those from other areas of the literature. Second, the experimental literature on self-uncertainty offers validated ways to operationalize it in empirical studies, and a theory of how it relates to the decision to engage in violence. Third, uncertainty-identity theory and the significance quest approach explicitly state how uncertainty drives stronger identification with extreme groups, tying uncertainty to the other situational factors.

Uncertainty ought to figure centrally in any comprehensive model of radicalization, but it is not the only relevant factor affected by the negative trigger events. Another important area is the individual's group and social identity.

3.1.2. Groups and social identity

All approaches mention the impact of groups and the sense of belonging to a perceived or real collective of individuals. Categorization of self and others into social groups is essential to comprehending social reality (Quinn & Oates, 2004), and the division between “us” and “them” an established distinction in the social sciences (Crisp & Turner, 2010). In the radicalization literature, this factor is conceptualized as reliance on one's social category—the group to which one belongs (Rast, Hogg, & Giessner, 2016)—and as a fusing of one's own identity with others (Swann & Buhrmester, 2015).

A strong social identity and a sense of a hostile outgroup “other” may explain readiness to engage in violence in general. In an integrative framework to explain the decision to engage in *political* violence, however, not all social identities or groups are equally relevant. For example, football hooligans or criminal gangs will sometimes engage in intergroup violence for perceived dominance, honor, or turf, and the processes that lead to that violence are likely similar to those I focus on in this dissertation (Mullins & Wither, 2016). However, for the violence to become political, it is necessary for the group to be *politicized* in some sense, to be represented as a group which engages in political issues and seeks to change policy or society in some way.

I suggest we choose the concept of *partisan identity* as a general description of the politicized groups to which an individual perceives themselves as belonging. Political partisanship is probably the most salient example of this

factor, conceptualized as the perception of membership of a particular political group (Huddy, Mason, & Aarøe, 2015). In the face of rising uncertainty, a strong sense of social identity helps the individual to maintain a positive self-concept and to create a buffer against intergroup threat (Hogg, Abrams, & Brewer, 2017). Supporting the conclusion of the radicalization literature that social identity is a driver of violence, the political science literature indicates that extreme political identities are associated with mass protest and political violence (Abramowitz & Webster, 2016; Rogowski & Sutherland, 2016).

A strength of using the partisan identity label is that it is relevant in explaining both violence erupting at mass political protests and extreme violence carved out along religious or ethno-nationalist fault lines. At the same time, it discriminates between political violence and other kinds of violence, such as organized crime. With the broad factors of uncertainty and partisan identity conceptualized, we are several steps closer to presenting an integrative model of violence. However, despite uncertainty and strong politicized social identities, not all groups resort to violence. One subelement is missing from the situational factors, namely something that may distinguish between when groups resort to violence and when they do not.

3.1.3. Ideology, narrative, and worldview

The question of the legitimizing role of ideology, narrative, or worldview is controversial. Politically, it is risky to generalize individual acts of violence carried out by a member of a specific political or religious group as being representative of the entire group. Similarly, we risk essentializing the violent act as indicative and endemic to a certain ideology. In some ways, giving one factor a privileged place as *the* explanation of violence resembles the role mental illness took in the early radicalization literature. On the one hand, then, ideology and mental illness resemble each other by creating a monolithic explanation of violence. On the other hand, they are each other's opposites, as the ideology explanation generalizes to all individuals in a certain group, while the mental illness explanation individualizes the acts as an expression of the perpetrator's psychological makeup.

Because of the generality of my research question and the ambition of creating a general framework for political violence, pointing at specific ideologies or political positions is inadequate. Rather, I suggest that the concept of *dark world perceptions*, which I elaborate below, captures the factor of interest. In looking for the general set of narratives and perceptions about the world that is conducive to violence, it is relevant to look at the violent worldviews, ideologies, and narratives that legitimize violence (McCauley & Moskalenko, 2017).

The literatures on the *militant extremist mindset* (Stankov, Saucier, & Knežević, 2010; Stankov, 2018) and dangerous worldview (Perry, Sibley & Duckitt, 2013; Sibley, Wilson, & Duckitt, 2007) provide a way to build a general factor capable of capturing extreme ideology and narratives. From linguistic analyses of extreme political groups' political manifestos, Stankov and colleagues (2010) developed general indicators of the mindset of those who engage in religious political violence. In a series of empirical studies across population samples in nine countries, they showed that the perceptions of the world associated with militant extremism were normally distributed among ordinary individuals. The extremist mindset, or *worldview* in Borum's (2014) conceptualization, holds that the world is a generally violent and dangerous place, where violence solves political conflict, and where spiritual or religious forces legitimize the use of violence against perceived enemies. For the purposes of the present dissertation, this conceptualization comes a long way towards a general conceptualization of the worldview factor, although it applies only to religiously motivated political violence. Yet we find other elements of the extremist mindset in other theories of violent narratives (Braddock & Horgan, 2016), ideologies (Jasko, LaFree and Kruglanski 2017), and worldviews (Borum, 2014), which suggests a way to generalize the mindset.

By combining the militant extremist mindset with these other approaches, I suggest a general mindset that encompasses a narrative that the world is a dangerous and vile place, where group interactions are hostile, where violence is widespread, and where deliberation is ineffective. As developed in Papers B and E, I label this factor *dark world perceptions*, and conceptualize it to capture general aspects of violent narratives or ideologies, and to distinguish groups that legitimize violence from those that do not.

The aim of the conceptualizations of uncertainty, partisan identity strength, and dark world perceptions is to capture common factors in the situational element involved in the progression towards political violence. While these factors may predict why individuals turn to violence more generally, they are not applicable in explaining why people respond differently under the same social circumstances, and why—after all—only a very small subset of people end up actually engaging in violence. To improve the model, therefore, we should also focus on the factors that do not differ across situations but individuals.

3.2. Personality and political violence

Documented as far back as the ancient Greeks, and likely in all of human history, there has been interest in the ways we differ from each other in our psychological makeup (Revelle, Wilt & Condon, 2011). How can it be that some

people are impulsive and thrill-seeking while others prefer careful collaborative consideration; that some require fixed social hierarchical structures and others equal deliberation? While uncertainty, narratives of a dark world, and partisan identity are induced by factors in the social environment, individuals react differently to similar pressures. In a basic sense, all individuals are unique, and have their own life narratives, experiences, and sense of self. These ideographic differences are interesting, but are difficult to construct nomothetic theory from. Rather, I argue that we should focus on the ways people *systematically* differ from each other in their thinking, feeling, relating, and behaving—in other words, their personalities (Widiger, 2012). Drawing from Papers C, D, and F, this section presents relevant constructs used in the study of individual differences in political psychology, and argues that an integrative model of the political psychology of violence ought to utilize an integrative model of personality.

The literature review revealed a lack of theorizing the role of individual differences. There were a range of relevant constructs. For example, in several studies, Kalmoe (2013; 2014; 2017) showed a relationship between trait aggression, political activism and support for violent state repression. Similarly, Henry and colleagues (2005) and Thomsen and colleagues (2014) related social dominance orientation and authoritarianism with support for intergroup violence. Social dominance orientation is the preference for hierarchy and inequality among social groups (Pratto et al., 1994), whereas authoritarianism encompasses submission to authorities, aggression towards outsiders, and adherence to conventional norms (Altemeyer, 1998).

While these findings are important in revealing the individual differences associated with political violence, they are difficult to integrate in a general framework. Trait aggression, social dominance orientation, and authoritarianism are narrowly defined personality traits. A helpful step towards an integration of these is to select higher-order, more general personality dimensions that capture the essence of each subordinate trait. In the next section, I propose that the Big Five taxonomy of personality can help us achieve this integration.

3.2.1. Big five taxonomy

Although several broad personality taxonomies exist, the five-dimensional Big Five is dominant within academic psychology and political science (John, Naumann, & Soto, 2008; Fatke, 2017). The Big Five taxonomy is the result of studies of natural languages and empirical clustering of trait adjectives (McCrae & Costa, 2003; Goldberg, 1990) conducted within psychology since

the 1930's (Allport & Odbert, 1936). We can understand the model as a hierarchy ranging from individual behavioral responses at the most specific level, to habits and characteristics, and to broad dimensions at the most general level. Although the labels of each factor differ between specific measures, they capture similar variation in personality. They are often labeled neuroticism, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience.

Neuroticism captures differences ranging from a generally stable mood to volatile emotionality and high frequency of negative affect. Extraversion concerns interpersonal gregariousness and social dominance on the one hand, and introversion and social insecurity on the other. High agreeableness describes friendliness and interpersonal sensitivity, whereas low agreeableness indicates interpersonal hostility and indifference. Conscientiousness captures the variation from achievement, organization, and dutifulness to impulsivity and carelessness. The last factor, openness to experience, involves openness to new ideas and flexibility of thought, although the content of this factor has been debated (DeYoung, Peterson & Higgins, 2005).

As mentioned above, the Big Five provides an opportunity to integrate findings on authoritarianism, social dominance orientation, and trait aggression. As such, authoritarianism describes the combination of low openness to experience and high extraversion and conscientiousness. Social dominance orientation relates to low agreeableness and openness, and trait aggression is a facet of low agreeableness (Ekehammar et al., 2004). With this integration, we can combine previous findings with results using the Big Five to investigate political protest.

How can we expect personality to relate to political violence? With its negative relationship to social dominance orientation and authoritarianism, openness to experience seems to be a key trait distinguishing those who do not engage in violence from those who do. From this, we should expect openness to experience to be negatively associated with political violence. Referencing back to the distinction between activism and violence, openness is positively related to collective political participation and engagement in political protest (Brandstätter & Opp, 2014; Gallego & Oberski, 2012; Vecchione et al., 2015). This further indicates that openness to experience may be a key trait in separating those who engage in peaceful protest from those who engage in more extreme measures. Agreeableness, with its negative association with social dominance orientation and trait aggression, is also relevant. High agreeableness is associated with a low degree of political hostility (Webster, 2018). As intergroup hostility is an element in dark world perceptions, we can expect agreeableness to distinguish people who do not engage in violence from those who do.

Although conscientiousness and extraversion are related to authoritarianism, I am aware of no empirical study that relates either of these factors directly to political violence. Extraversion is related to activism and low political hostility (Bakker et al., 2016; Webster, 2018; Vecchione et al., 2015), but not reliably so (Brandstätter & Opp, 2014), making predictions difficult. Conscientiousness is related to political activism, but only when activism is a moral duty (Gallego & Oberski, 2012). A single study (Brandstätter & Opp, 2014) found a weak and negative relationship between neuroticism and engagement in political protest.

Despite the lack of a strong empirical base for predicting the relationship between these factors and engagement in political violence, the Big Five provides a general model that captures broad variation in personality relevant for our purpose of creating an integrated model of political violence. It consolidates results using narrow traits, and enables hypotheses regarding personality-situation interaction. Furthermore, with the five dimensions providing a general coverage of individual differences in personality, we can integrate findings on protest and collective violence with results from investigations into the psychology of other kinds of political violence, such as lone actor violence. The literature review revealed that problematic personality patterns are sometimes at play in such lone actor attacks. If we are to integrate these cases into the model, we need to be able to measure problematic elements of normal personality. The next section considers some of these.

3.2.2. Dark traits for dark behaviors

By focusing exclusively on the Big Five, we risk glossing over personality functioning that is at the fringes of normal functioning, but not disordered enough to qualify as pathological. Interpersonal volatility, lack of empathy, and aggressively dominant behavior are traits mentioned in the literature on extremism (Corner & Gill, 2015; Lindekilde, Malthaner, & O'Connor, 2019), but are rarely captured by brief Big Five measures. Therefore, we risk losing precision by moving from narrow traits to broad dimensions. I argue that the solution is not to rely on the narrow traits, as previous studies have done, but to measure Big Five personality and relevant subclinical individual differences concurrently.

Several taxonomies of subclinical personality functioning are available. Three of the most popular are the personality inventory for the American psychiatric manual DSM-5 (PID-5; American Psychiatric Association, 2013); the *dark triad* of Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy (Paulhus & Williams, 2002); or the *dark tetrad* that includes sadism (Book et al., 2016). The PID-5 is a response to the literature that shows how disordered personality

functioning can be mapped to extreme expressions of the Big Five factors (Gore & Widiger, 2013; Gøtzsche-Astrup & Moskowitz, 2016). The broad traits of the PID-5 cover subclinical functioning in the broadest sense, but may not provide enough depth to target the specific issues relevant to political violence. It was constructed to be used broadly to indicate potentially disordered personality functioning, as a tool for practitioners.

The dark triad and dark tetrad more directly capture traits relevant for predicting political violence, because they focus on malevolent, aggressive tendencies. These traits consist of a higher-order personality dimension of interpersonal callousness, antagonism, and malevolence (McKee, Waples, & Tullis, 2017; Book et al., 2016), which fit the literatures on radicalization to violent extremism, political hostility, and aggression reviewed above. The two taxonomies differ in whether they assert three or four traits under the larger personality domain. In the dark triad/tetrad taxonomies, narcissism describes a grandiose feeling of superiority and dominance; subclinical psychopathy concerns lack of empathy, impulsivity and thrill-seeking and reckless behavior; and sadism describes enjoying cruelty in everyday life (Buckels, Jones, & Paulhus, 2013). Machiavellianism, the only trait that does not originate in clinical psychology but in political science, describes interpersonal manipulation, cynicism, and putting ends over means.

The literature has not indicated that sadism plays a role in political violence, and there is substantially more research on the dark triad. A first relevant finding is the dark triad dimension's relationship with a range of problematic behaviors, such as sexual deviance, cheating, interpersonal aggression, and crime (Furnham, Richard and Paulhus, 2013; McKee, Waples and Tullis, 2017; Book, Visser and Volk; 2015; Muris et al., 2017), as well as a preference for aggressive and hostile politicians (Hart, Richardson, & Tortoriello, 2018). For the decision to engage in political violence, low empathy, interpersonal hostility, and thrill-seeking, captured in the psychopathy trait, seem particularly relevant. Machiavellianism may also predict *political* violence, but perhaps not violence in general, as engaging in violence in order to reach some political goal can be legitimized through a focus on outcomes rather than the means used to reach the outcome.

Because of the larger literature than for the dark tetrad, because the higher-order dimension is the same, and this dissertation's specific focus on *political* violence as opposed to violence or harm generally, the dark triad holds the largest promise for an integrative approach to the psychological mechanisms of political violence. The combination of the Big Five and the dark triad provides broad coverage of individual difference factors associated with political violence. The next step towards the final holistic model is the integration of dispositions with environmental factors.

3.3. Conceptualizing political violence

In Chapter 2, I used the work of McCauley and Moskaleiko (McCauley & Moskaleiko, 2017; Moskaleiko & McCauley, 2009) to make two central distinctions. I use these distinctions to conceptualize political violence in this dissertation. The first distinction was between political activism and radical political violence. Whereas political activism includes such acts as participating in a demonstration and engaging with local politics, radical political violence includes attacks on police, rioting, or politically motivated attacks on individuals or members of outgroups. Central to this distinction is the view that political violence is a different category of political behavior, and not just an escalation of political activism. As mentioned before, this does not imply that political violence is a homogeneous category, but that this dissertation focuses on differences across activism and violence and similarities within the category of political violence.

The second distinction is between violent attitudes and behaviors. Just as activism is not a necessary precursor to violence, believing that violence is a legitimate or effective way to engage in the political process is conceptually distinct from actually engaging in violence. Many more people may believe that violence is sometimes legitimate or necessary than the few who imagine themselves engaging in it. In conceptualizing political violence, I argue that we must distinguish between political activism and violence, and violent attitudes and violent behavior. As Table 2 shows, we can conceptualize political violence as either the belief that political violence is legitimate and effective, or as actual engagement in political violence.

Table 2. Distinguishing activism from violence, and attitudes from behavior

	Political activism	Political violence
Attitudes	Belief that political activism is legitimate and effective (e.g. that it is a moral duty to vote).	Belief that political violence is legitimate and effective (e.g. that force can be necessary to defend one's political group).
Behavior	Engagement in political activism (e.g. demonstrations, voting, political campaigns).	Engagement in political violence (e.g. attacking police at demonstration, attacks on political opponents).

Although the categories are conceptually distinct, the literature seldom makes this distinction. Therefore, how the situational and dispositional factors yielded from the literature relate differently to either is an empirical question. In the following, I continue to refer to political violence as the duality of violent beliefs and behavior. However, in operationalizing the concept and carrying out the empirical studies, this double distinction becomes indispensable.

3.4. Person and situation

For more than twenty years, the so-called “person-situation debate” dominated personality psychology by questioning whether individual dispositions had an important effect on behavior over and above situational factors (Kenrick & Funder, 1988). While the debate is still ongoing in some areas, several ways to surmount an either-or debate now exist. The most influential of these are interactionist models, which are models of how individual differences and situations influence outcomes directly and moderate one another’s impact (e.g. Judge & Zapata, 2014; Fleeson & Nofle, 2009).

In political science, this debate has been less dramatic than in psychology. It is nevertheless relevant when discussing individual difference and situational factors in the same framework. One reason may be that interest in personality has only really entered into political science in the past two decades, after the person-situation debate receded in psychology. If we focus on only one or the other, it becomes much more difficult to unearth relationships and mechanisms, and impossible to create an integrative framework for the study of political violence. Mondak and colleagues (2010) have suggested an influential interactionist model. Building on the observation that situational factors, dispositional factors, and their interplay are required in explaining human behavior, they identify the three fundamental pillars to identify pathways to political behavior. In Mondak et al.’s framework, we should be interested in three basic relationships in explaining political behavior. First, we can study trait effects: the direct relationship between personality and some outcome of interest. Second, we can study situational effects: direct relationships between situational or environmental factors and the same outcomes. These two classes of explanations are relevant when we expect *homogeneous* relationships, i.e. when the effects of one class of factor are independent of the other.

Uniquely homogeneous relationships are rare. Rather, most effects are *heterogeneous* interaction effects between disposition and situation. These heterogeneous effects are more difficult to study than the homogeneous ones, for two reasons. First, there is a tradeoff between reliability and parsimony, in the sense that the more complex the models we implement in our research, the fewer resources are available to ensure a precise measurement of each element. Second, heterogeneous effects, more so than homogeneous effects, require theoretical work and precise predictions.

Despite the potential issues with integrating situation and disposition, the framework proposed by Mondak and colleagues (2010) provides a useful way of doing this in the political arena, and has informed studies of political participation and identification (Gerber et al., 2012; Ha, Kim, & Jo, 2013). I believe it holds promise for an integrative theory of violent political behavior as

well. With this framework and the situational and personality factors, we now have the building blocks for the integrative model. The next section pieces the factors together, and concludes this chapter with a presentation of the integrative model.

3.5. An integrative model

This section summarizes the predictions from Sections 3.1 and 3.2, and presents an integrative model of political violence that includes possible heterogeneous effects. Situational factors include uncertainty, political social identity, and dark world perceptions. Dispositional factors include the Big Five and dark triad of personality.

I expect an increase in uncertainty as the first prerequisite towards violence. When negative trigger events occur in the environment, the increasing uncertainty disembeds individuals from their daily lives, causing a search for reintegration. This search is likely perceived as more acute among some individuals than others. In particular, those with a high need for cognitive closure and certainty in their environment may react more adversely to uncertainty than others, as characterized by low openness to experience (Connelly, Ones, & Chernyshenko, 2014; Gosling, Rentfrow, & Swann, 2003). I expect the effect of destabilizing uncertainty to be particularly strong for low-openness individuals. Therefore, the first prediction of a heterogeneous effect for political violence is between uncertainty and openness to experience. Importantly, I am not suggesting that increased uncertainty always results in a stronger willingness to defend one's group through extreme measures. Rather, uncertainty prompts a psychological shift where extreme parochial actions, including violence, is one option.

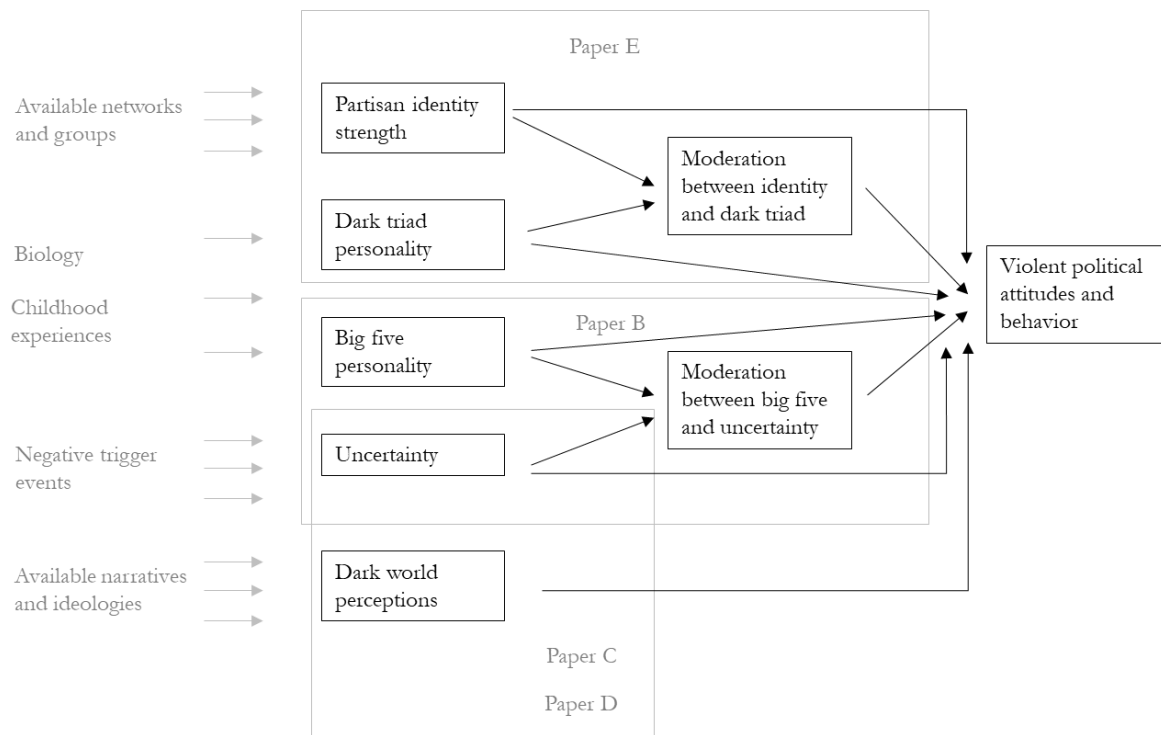
The next situational factor is partisan social identity. This factor is conceptualized not as nominal membership of extreme political groups, but rather as an overlap between one's own sense of self and a politicized group self. Even membership of mainstream political groups might lead to extreme defensive behavior when the group is under perceived threat. However, only a small minority ever engage in actual political violence, indicating a possibly heterogeneous effect. Furthermore, studies of how mainstream political messages affect individuals with problematic traits such as high aggression (Kalmoe, 2014) indicate that the normal Big Five dispositions may be less relevant to uncover heterogeneous relationships for partisan identity. Rather, I expect the dark triad dimension to be more relevant, because it describes a readiness to engage in acts of interpersonal aggression and to accept any means to reach a desired outcome. The second prediction is therefore of an interaction between the dark triad personality factor and people's political social identities.

Finally I address the question of dark world perceptions. I constructed this concept to incorporate general narrative and ideological elements of worldviews that legitimize violence. I expect more anxious individuals to react more strongly to this worldview, indicating that trait neuroticism may be relevant.

Apart from the heterogeneous relationships with personality, I expect a direct relationship between low agreeableness and openness and political violence. I base this prediction on the literature on aggression, social dominance orientation, and authoritarianism, as well as the indication that interpersonal hostility and closed-mindedness may play a role. Similar reasoning leads to the prediction that psychopathy is positively related to violence.

With the general framework and homogeneous and heterogeneous effects specified, I can now present an integrative model of the individual-level mechanisms and processes that I investigate concerning engagement in political violence (Figure 1). Building on the literature review, I have used this chapter to argue that the next step in this research agenda is building and testing a holistic framework. While decisions of what to include and exclude are contestable, I have based my predictions on several converging literatures across psychology, political science, and terrorism studies. The next chapter discusses ways to operationalize the concepts and methods to test the relationships empirically.

Figure 1. Integrative model of radicalization to political violence



Note: Solid squares and lines indicate concepts and relationships that I investigate empirically in this dissertation. Grey squares refer to the specific papers. Grey text indicates antecedent factors hypothesized to influence the constructs.

Chapter 4: Methods

With the integrative framework in place, I begin this chapter by summarizing the data sources and methods used in the six papers of my dissertation. I focus on the data sources themselves, which include observational surveys, survey experiments, laboratory experiments, and publicly available data. I provide an overview of these in Table 3. The chapter continues, in Section 4.1, to a discussion of the strengths and limitations of using experimental and non-experimental designs, and Section 4.2 considers measurement of factors from the integrative framework. Section 4.3 turns to the central question of how to measure political violence, contrasting attitudes, behavioral intentions, and observation, and Section 4.4 concludes the chapter by taking up the argument for studying political violence in samples of ordinary individuals, despite the limitations that this involves.

Table 3. Overview of data sources in the dissertation

No.	Used in article	Description
1	C	Survey of 401 Danish students, validating Danish versions of intentions to engage in violence and activism, dark world perceptions, uncertainty.
2	C	Cross-cultural US-Danish survey (n=2,864) experimental induction of uncertainty and dark world perceptions, measuring personality, violent intentions. Quasi-representative of respective populations on age, gender, education, region.
3	B, E	Survey of 3,000 young adult Americans (ages 18-30) quasi-representative of population on age, gender, region. Measuring Big Five and dark triad personality, partisan identity strength, uncertainty, violent intentions.
4	D	Laboratory experiment with 241 US college students. Induced dark world perceptions and uncertainty, measured support for violence and violent intentions.
5	B	American National Election Studies 2016 (N=2,489). Phone and online data collection. Measured personality, support for violence, uncertainty.
6	E	Survey of 956 partisans identifying as either US Democrats or Republicans. Measured dark triad personality, partisan strength, violent intentions.
7	E	Survey experiment of 897 US participants quasi-representative on age, gender, education, US region. Induced partisan identity, measured dark triad and violent intentions.

4.1. Experimental and non-experimental designs

For political science, and the social sciences in general, establishing mechanisms that connect constructs is essentially an exercise in falsification, of ruling out alternative explanations for a proposed relationship. Observable relationships that appear linked as cause and effect are often not that, but contingent on some third, unobserved factor. For the study of political violence, adjudicating between factors that are true causes and factors that are merely correlates is fraught with the same problems as in other areas of the social sciences. The consequences of “getting it wrong” are aggravated by the fact that our policy interventions work, or fail, through mechanisms postulated in research (a point I discuss at length in Paper A). Furthermore, criticism of interventions against violent political extremism often mention the risk of iatrogenic effects: negative, unintended effects of policy (Lindekilde, 2012). Surveillance of particular neighborhoods, for example, implemented to increase safety, can increase the sense of ethnic or political persecution (Awan, 2012), which facilitates the ideological and identity-based mechanisms suggested in previous chapters of this summary.

Because of these risks, the question of getting the mechanism right is particularly critical in this area. In this section, I present principles of causality and experimental logic, and discuss strengths and weaknesses associated with experimentation in this area, as well as practical ways to influence the factors from the framework in a research setting.

4.1.2. Causality and experimental logic

I concluded the review by stating that the road ahead lies in understanding mechanisms of political violence. To do that, we need a definition of cause and effect. Although different perspectives on causality exist in the social sciences, an influential one is the potential outcomes framework (Holland, 1986). This framework asks us to imagine the presence of some factor A (the cause). Second, we are asked to imagine two states of another variable factor B (the outcome) when factor A is present and when factor A is absent. These two states are B’s *potential outcomes* in the presence and absence of A, and the *causal effect* of A on B is the difference in these two states.

This framework is helpful for several reasons. First, the focus on differences in potential outcomes forces us to acknowledge that an effect is always one state relative to some other potential state. Second, the framework specifies the cause of the effect (factor A), and points to the importance of ruling out other causes that could create omitted variable bias. Third, the framework uses the language of treatment, control, and randomization in the definition of causality itself. By this, the framework suggests that the starting point for

assessing relationships in the social sciences is the ideal type experimental setup (Gerber & Green, 2012). This does not mean that we cannot or should not compromise, or that laboratory experiments must be the gold standard of all social science. Rather, it makes us aware that we *always* compromise when we choose our research designs. Through this language, we can be explicit about them. Finally, the potential outcomes framework points out that because we can never observe any single phenomenon in both potential outcomes, any determination of a causal effect must always rest on untestable assumptions of average causal effects across similar phenomena (for example, similar participants in an experiment).

Experiments solve the problem of omitted variable bias through randomized allocation of the objects under investigation to each state of the cause, usually labeled treatment and control conditions. A factor induces omitted variable bias when it determines the allocation of states of both A and of B, blocking our ability to establish a relationship as causal. Thus, if we can be assured that no factor other than our random mechanism has allocated states of A, any differences in the outcome provides an estimation of the average potential difference outcomes, and therefore the causal effect of the treatment relative to control.

Practical application of this framework therefore asks us to commence with an experimental logic. In practice, all studies make compromises to the experimental ideal, whether they are strictly controlled laboratory experiments, qualitative fieldwork, or observation studies. The review revealed that our knowledge on political violence is in need of assessing which relationships are causal and which are not. In social psychology, the traditional solution to this kind of situation has been the laboratory experiment, where human participants are physically present in a laboratory with an experimenter who administers treatment and control, and measures outcomes on some factor of interest.

The laboratory experiment represents the prototype of causal designs, is still the backbone for experimental social science, and was helpful in this project (see Paper E). It has also received criticism on several accounts, some which are particularly relevant to the study of the mechanisms of political violence. First, laboratory experiments often rely on college student participants. Use of student pools can be problematic, because students are typically more homogeneous and less attentive than the adult population. This can result in both inflation and attenuation of the average causal effect (Hauser & Schwartz, 2016; Peterson, 2001). As we are interested in the mechanisms that lead ordinary individuals towards violence, excessive homogeneity is a problem.

Furthermore, studies based on student samples often result in different effect size estimates than do studies using nationally representative populations (Buhrmester, Kwang & Gosling, 2011; Henrich, Heine & Norenzayan, 2010). In the language of the potential outcomes framework, we still get the average causal effect of the treatment on the participants. However, this tells us something about the average causal effect on the population of interest only *if* we assume participants are similar to the population group on parameters that could influence the effect (Klein et al., 2014).

Another limitation of laboratory experiments is that they often rely on relatively small groups of participants, necessitated by time and monetary constraints related to accessing buildings and participants. The effect of this is low *power*, or a weak statistical ability to reject the null-hypothesis of no effect, but it also feeds into the discussion of the replicability of social science results (Open Science Collaboration, 2015). Because statistical analyses often rely on threshold values for the likelihood of the difference between outcomes given a hypothesis of no true difference, and since significant values are often more likely to be published, a reliance on many small-sample, under-powered studies increases the risk that our inferences are spurious (Bialystok et al., 2015).

Alleviating some of these issues around laboratory experiments requires us to increase power by increasing the number of participants while weighing time and monetary constraints. One way of doing this is to relax the requirement of physical presence in the laboratory, and rely on treatments and outcomes that can be measured from a distance. Survey experimental designs distributed online offer such a solution. Panel companies today provide access to participants vastly more heterogeneous than college students, with the option for samples that are representative of the general population on important sociodemographic factors. Furthermore, surveys allow for a large number of participants to be “treated” with the experimental manipulation, with a resulting increase in power to reject the null-hypothesis even when the true effect is small. Finally, surveys allow for precise administration of the treatments and secure randomization to experimental groups through computer algorithms, which increase the transparency and replicability of the studies.

Survey experiments provide generalizable samples, precision of treatment and measurements, power, and a liberation from homogeneous participants, but carry limitations as well. Because everything is administered within the constraints of a survey, options for treatment and measurement are restricted, and often require strong assumptions about our operationalization of background concepts. The loss of experimenter control for online administration means that although we know the treatment has been administered, we cannot be certain that it has been received—a problem of compliance. Inattention,

people who speed through the survey, response sets, or “trolls” are other threats in this vein.

Despite these limitations, survey and survey experimental methods are suggested to investigate the relationships in the integrative framework, because they complement limitations in the existing literature, and can in turn be complemented by the strengths of existing research that relies on other methods. In the next section, I present operationalizations of the central factors from the integrative framework as treatments in survey experiments.

4.2. Manipulating transient states

Three methodological questions need to be answered before survey experimental methods can justifiably be used to investigate the integrative framework. They relate to the causes, the participants in the studies, and the operationalization of political violence. I discuss these in this section and the following two.

A first distinction between the “causes” of political violence as they are presented in Chapter 3 is between those that can be plausibly induced experimentally and those that cannot. In the potential outcomes framework, only factors that *could have been different* can be said to be causes (Holland, 1986). In the original framework, this means that attributes such as characteristics and traits (e.g. age, height, or personality) that are “fixed” at the level of the observation—in this case the individual—cannot be considered causes in the experimental sense. Although the discussion about the flexibility or changeability of adult personality is far from over (e.g. Hudson & Fraley, 2018), this distinction means that experimental manipulation is relevant for the situational factors of uncertainty, dark world perceptions, and partisan social identity, but not for the Big Five personality traits or the dark triad. All factors, however, still need to be measured. In the following, I take up the operationalization of each factor in turn.

4.2.1. Uncertainty

In the uncertainty-identity tradition, *self-uncertainty* is usually operationalized through a short battery of questions asking the participants to indicate their feelings of uncertainty about themselves, their place in the world, and their future. Papers B and C do this. Furthermore, as is typical for a social-psychological theory, uncertainty has been induced through laboratory experiments with college students (Goldman & Hogg, 2016). To transiently induce a feeling of uncertainty in my studies, I adapted the existing manipulation to fit an online survey format. In Studies 2 and 4, participants were “treated” with a prime to increase uncertainty where they had to think about the three

things that made them feel most uncertain about themselves, their lives, and their futures. In laboratory studies, this treatment usually takes around five minutes to complete. As the risk of attrition is more acute for online survey participants than laboratory ones, in the survey experimental study, a more minimal prime of one minute was used. As the comparison or control condition, participants completed an identical task where they had to focus on feelings of certainty instead.

In the ANES Study 5, no questions targeted uncertainty explicitly. However, as uncertainty is defined as uncertainty related to an individual's self, place in the world, and future (Hogg, 2014), I constructed an index from six items that captured these aspects of the concept. These were: anxiety about one's financial situation, uncertainty with respect to one's health care costs and health situation, the perception of being worse off than last year and the anticipation that next year would be worse, and worry about getting a job (if unemployed) or losing one's job (if employed). Existing research has documented that these indirect indices map onto feelings of self-uncertainty (Hogg & Mahajan, 2018). Using an exploratory factor analysis in the 2012 ANES dataset and a confirmatory factor analysis on the 2016 ANES dataset, this index showed adequate psychometric properties. Paper B goes into a more detailed discussion about this operationalization of uncertainty.

4.2.2. Dark world perceptions

The same studies manipulated dark world perceptions. The starting point for a measure of dark world perceptions was the Militant Extremist Mindset scale developed by Stankov, Saucier, and Knežević (2010), and the dangerous worldview (Perry, Sibley, & Duckitt, 2013), adapted to fit a non-religious setting. Questions regarding the belief in a "Divine Power" were replaced with questions about the belief in intergroup hostility and the value in deliberating with others, as this factor is central to the conceptualization of the construct. In Study 1, where this questionnaire was administered, it showed good psychometric properties (see Paper C's appendix for a discussion). In the studies that manipulated dark world perceptions (Studies 2 and 4), we followed existing priming procedures using images and text to influence participants. Those "treated" to adopt transient dark world perceptions viewed six images with short sentences similar to news images and headlines. The text focused on political conflicts in the world, groups becoming more hostile to each other, and political elites becoming less and less attentive to their populations. In the survey study, participants in the control condition were not influenced in any way, but skipped straight to the dependent variable after the high or low uncertainty condition, in order to be able to gauge the direct effect of uncertainty.

In the laboratory study, participants were shown images and texts relating to mundane, local things that painted the world as a regular, predictable place. Examples were a new cider recipe, a local surfing competition, and which milkshake had been the most popular in the past year (surprisingly perhaps, this turned out to be strawberry).

4.2.3. Partisan social identity

The last situational factor, partisan social identity, was measured in Studies 3 and 6, but only manipulated in Study 7. A first question was which political groups to include. I selected the two main US political parties for two reasons. First, the theoretical expectation is for a *general* relationship between stronger partisan identities and political violence. Second, sampling the general population necessitates a selection of political groups that a sufficient number of people consider themselves to belong to. Partisan social identity was measured in Study 6 by selecting only those who identified as Democrats or Republicans, and asking them about their partisan position on a 7-point scale from extremely liberal to extremely conservative. This classical way of eliciting partisan position has been criticized for being too coarse (Huddy, Mason, & Aarøe, 2012), and Study 3 included a more detailed measure. Here, partisan identity was measured through four items tapping overlap between self and social identity directly. Last, in Study 7, an experimental induction of partisan social identity was conducted, again with Democrats and Republicans in the sample, following Delton, Peterson and Robertson (2018). The treatment consists of asking participants to think of themselves in explicitly partisan terms, and to answer the outcomes while thinking of themselves as explicitly partisan. In the control condition, participants are asked to answer as if they were politically neutral observers.

A potential criticism of my operationalizations of the situational constructs is that I attempt to measure factors in the environment through self-reports, essentially making an error in the level of observation. However, as I discussed in Chapter 3, I am interested in the psychological effects of the situational factors. For example, while I theorized that negative trigger events are what causes a feeling of uncertainty, these are background factors in the framework that I attempt to test. Similarly, while the existence of narratives that identify violence as legitimate and effective is a necessary precondition, I am interested in how dark world perceptions, once adopted by the individual, impact their support for and intentions to engage in violence. Importantly, this does not mean that questions of which trigger events induce uncertainty or how dark narratives become embedded in society are irrelevant. But they are not what I study here.

4.2.4. Personality

While survey methods are new for some of the situational concepts, there are validated measures for all of the dispositional ones. For the Big Five, I used two shorter measures throughout the studies. They were the ten-item personality inventory (TIPI; Gosling, Rentfrow, & Swann, 2003), and the 20-item mini-IPIP scale (Donnellan et al., 2006). Although abbreviated scales are often necessary, they demonstrably attenuate statistical relationships (Bakker & Leles, 2018). However, even at 20 items, the Big Five has adequate validity (Bakker & Leles, 2018). While comprehensive measures, for example 50- and 120-item Big Five measures, have better psychometric properties, they were not feasible for the survey studies. For the dark triad personality dimension, there are two influential shorter measures. The first, the Dirty Dozen (Jonason & Webster, 2010), is relatively imprecise, but is easy and quick to administer with only 12 items. The longer 27-item Short Dark Triad (SD3; Jones & Paulhus, 2014) maps better onto longer standard measures, has higher reliability and internal consistency (Blais & Pruyssers, 2017), and more clearly taps behavioral indicators of the traits than the Dirty Dozen. I used both of these in the studies, preferring the longer SD3 when feasible.

The empirical papers (Papers B-E) go into detail with the individual measures used, the reasons for selecting or constructing them, and their psychometric properties. The next section takes up how best to measure the outcome of interest.

4.3. Measuring political violence

Another challenge to empirically investigating the framework lies in operationalizing and measuring political violence. The behavioral sciences have been criticized for relying on self-reports and proxies for behavior too far removed from actual outcomes of interest (Baumeister, Vohs, & Funder, 2007). The difficulty of measuring the behavioral outcome of interest here is not unique to political violence. In Chapter 3, I argued that we must distinguish between the attitude that political violence is legitimate and effective, and behavior or behavioral intentions to engage in it oneself. In the following, I draw on the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991) to distinguish between attitudes, behavioral intentions, and actual behavior. We can understand attitudes as mental orientations that structure action alternatives but are not situationally specific. Behavioral intentions can be defined as specific to situations and more directly related to specific actions. Finally, actual behavior are those actions that are observable by a third party. The studies included in the review used several different ways to measure political violence, and there are

a range of options available to both researchers and practitioners (for an overview, see Scarcella, Page, & Furtado, 2016).

4.3.1. Attitudes

Politically violent attitudes are positive attitudes towards violence as a political means, or positive attitudes towards people who deploy violence in their political struggles. While it is easy to dismiss these as less relevant because they are not strongly related to actual behavior, they are interesting for the study of political violence in their own right. First, they are easy to tap, as omnipresent news coverage of violent events means that most people will have—or can quickly form—an opinion on political violence. Second, more so than at the other domains, we are likely to find substantial variability at this level among the general public. Proviolent attitudes are not illegal, although there may be a normative pressure even at this level to not support violence. For example, seeing violence as a legitimate and effective way to solve political conflicts is a part of several democratic government definitions of violent extremism (Sedgwick, 2010). Third, as we saw in the review chapter, violent groups and individuals often rely on a base of support from larger groups, making violent attitudes less innocent than they may appear.

Attitudes towards using political violence have been measured in several of the studies and approaches identified in the review, from support for violent groups (Atran, 2016) to violent government tactics (Kalmoe, 2017), and the perceived legitimacy and effectiveness of political violence (Kruglanski et al., 2014). For elucidating general mechanisms towards violence, the last measurement of support for violence as legitimate and effective is relevant, for several reasons. First, for the devoted actor, uncertainty-identity, and significance quest theories, coming to view violence as legitimate and effective is a necessary element in later engagement in political violence. Second, population attitudes towards political violence is an interesting parameter in itself, as it can create the “base of support” that violent organizations depend upon and recruit from (McCauley & Moskalenko, 2017).

The effects of experimental manipulations are likely larger on normatively less problematic behavior, such as indicating general support for violence rather than indicating own intentions of engaging in violence. In studies with low power, asking about attitudes may therefore be more prudent. For that reason, violent attitudes were chosen as the outcome measure in the laboratory Study 4 by asking participants to indicate the extent to which they supported two statements, one expressing the view that violence is effective and one that violence is legitimate in solving political conflicts. This operationalization of violent attitudes follows Jasko, LaFree, and Kruglanski (2017). In the

ANES Study 5, participants were asked whether they felt that violence was justified for people to pursue their political goals.

4.3.2. Behavioral intentions

Behavioral intentions are indications to act in a certain way under a real or hypothetical scenario. Some of the strengths, and problems, in operationalizing violent attitudes carry over to behavioral intentions. We are still likely to find variance in the normal population. Furthermore, individuals tend to be relatively precise when predicting their own behavior in some future situation (Armitage & Conner, 2001). Asking about behavioral intentions, as opposed to actual behavior, is also relatively straightforward in terms of legal or ethical concerns. Intentions have the strength over attitudes that they directly target the behavioral pyramid. Webb and Sheeran (2006), from a meta-analysis of a wide range of behavioral intentions and actual behavior, concluded that a medium-to-large effect size change in behavioral intentions corresponded to small-to-medium effect size changes in actual behavior.

Asking about behavioral intentions is often used in the literature on both protest and violence (Brandstätter and Opp 2014; Obaidi et al. 2018), and several validated measures exist (Scarcella, Page, & Furtado, 2016). Behavioral intentions to engage in political violence are the core outcome measure in the papers in this dissertation. The foundation for an operationalization of this factor comes from Moskalenko and McCauley's (2009) Activism and Radicalism Intentions Scale. The original scale consists of ten items, factorialized into activism intentions and radicalism intentions. My modified scale puts more emphasis on political violence, and asks about intentions to join a violent organization, threatening political opponents with violence, attacking police and security forces at a violent demonstration, planning illegal political acts, encouraging others to engage in violence, and violently attacking members of an outgroup that had wronged one's political ingroup. The revised activism scale asked about intentions to engage in activism on social media, to become a member of, donate money to, or volunteer for a political organization, and travel to participate in a demonstration.

The revised scales were used in all of the original studies. The wording for the intentions to engage in violence, while hypothetical, provides specific scenarios to attempt to ground the questions in a potential future reality. I believe that behavioral intentions represent the optimal level of operationalizing political violence for large-n studies using quantitative analysis. However, although deploying behavioral measures is out of reach for survey experiments

such as the ones used in this dissertation, they deserve consideration, in particular because they can help to validate findings using attitude and behavioral intentions measures.

4.3.3. Behavioral measures

At the third level, we have behavioral measures of political violence. Measuring actual behaviors would be the best way to inform the integrative model. However, the small number of individuals who end up actually engaging in violence creates practical hurdles that are difficult to traverse. First, access to those who have engaged in violence is often impossible, a reason for the initial lack of empirical progress in the field (Schuurman, 2018). Second, in the general population, we are unlikely to find many who have engaged in violence, and likely even fewer on online panels. Third, as opposed to attitudes and behavioral intentions, ethical issues and issues of veracity around asking people to disclose potential illegal behavior are larger.

Deploying measures of actual behavior is unfeasible for online surveys and laboratory experiments with college students. Despite this limitation, there are ways of tapping behavior that can help inform and validate the results found in studies that rely on attitudes and behavioral intentions. Recently constructed databases of individuals who carried out violent political acts by The National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), and by researchers at University College London (Gill, Horgan, & Deckert, 2014) indicate a way forward. They use court transcripts, interviews, and publicly available information. As we argue in Paper F, for example, results of studies that target a nonviolent population and those that target violent populations can and should support each other.

This section has distinguished between attitudes, behavioral intentions, and actual behavior, and argued for the use of attitudes and behavioral intentions to illuminate the theoretical framework. Table 4 summarizes the measures applied in this dissertation. These offer a viable road to the mechanisms of violence, but carry an untestable assumption of a relationship with actual violence. Attitudes are helpful in informing us about the mechanisms that drive the base of support for violent groups, and where low power makes detecting effects on intentions difficult. Actual behavior is relevant for validating or contradicting findings from the other levels. While none of these approaches captures the ideal way of investigating political violence, using all three provides triangulation and a way forward to investigate the integrative framework. The next section takes up concerns over investigating these questions in the general population.

Table 4. Measuring violent attitudes and behavior, as contrasted with activism

	Political activism	Political violence
Attitudes	Not measured.	Support for political violence as legitimate and effective. Violence as way to reach political goals.
Behavior	Activism intentions scale (<i>e.g. be active on social media, donate money and time, travel for public protest</i>).	Violent intentions scale (<i>e.g. support threats against political enemies, attack police or security forces, encourage violence, retaliate against political enemies</i>).

4.4. Studying radicalization and violence in normative populations

So far, the summary has made an assumption when discussing independent and dependent measures, one that needs to be critically reviewed: that it is possible to investigate the psychological mechanisms that drive political violence in the general population. The second chapter discussed the lack of empirical studies, largely due to lack of access to violent populations. Furthermore, the small size of this population means that the options for applying large-*n* research designs are limited. Therefore, even where access has been possible, the relatively small number of observations has meant that quantitative analyses were difficult. As an answer to the main question of this dissertation relies in part on causal inference and quantitative methods, this problem must be solved. In the following subsections, I discuss the argument for using the general population as participants. Finally, I acknowledge the limitations in this approach, and argue that the solution lies in following the potential outcomes framework in taking the *best possible* approach given research constraints.

4.4.1. General population as participants

One solution to the challenge of acquiring a large number of participants lies in the use of the general population as participants. This means recruiting participants unlikely to have engaged in violence or hold radical views. On the one hand, the general population is readily available to researchers interested in political behavior, with only ethical and budgetary limits. With the general population, we can design studies that are precise enough to test hypothesized relationships directly rather than limit ourselves to studies after the fact. Furthermore, we can use a logic of treatment and control to investigate differences between those who have taken the path towards violence and those who have not. On the other hand, the general population, at least in most countries,

is non-extremist and likely not at risk of embracing political violence (Grossman, 1996). One might therefore doubt the value in studying this population when we are interested in studying fringe behavior. To overcome this doubt, we must show that there is value in studying a non-normative phenomenon in normative populations. Below, I provide two arguments for just that.

First, studying when and why ordinary individuals are likely to support or consider engaging in violence on behalf of their (political) group is important in its own right (Littman & Paluck, 2015). Although violence marks the limit of legible political behavior in modern societies, it does remain a part of the political scene, as unexpected mass unrest and targeted acts of violence. Precisely *because* ordinary individuals are resistant to violence, investigating the mechanisms of political violence is particularly worthwhile in an otherwise peaceful group.

Second, studying the general population can aid us in trying to shed light on the mechanisms that apply to all individuals, moderates and radicals alike. The second reason for using “ordinary” individuals is the implication for the small group that actively considers pursuing a violent path. If we can make ordinary people consider—even for a moment—violence as a viable action alternative after brief psychological primes, stronger and persistent versions of these factors are likely to have serious consequences for people who are already at the fringes of normative political behavior. Several of the theoretical approaches, including uncertainty-identity theory, the devoted actor approach, and significance-quest theory, argue for the sensibility in studying the general population, based on the rationale that if applications of the theories can move “ordinary” people to support violence, they ought to also facilitate violence for those for whom violence is not just a hypothetical.

4.4.2. Normal mechanisms, not psychopathology

A counter argument to the points above is that because political violence is exceptional, those who engage in violence are *categorically* different from others, making any comparison meaningless. The present argument rests on the assumption that this is not the case. Stated positively, we need to assume that the relevant mechanisms differ only dimensionally, not categorically, between the normal population and those who engage in violence. Two reasons make this assumption tenable.

First, just as the problem of access became apparent in the literature review, so too can we find a resolution of this issue in the review. There is consensus that the dominant mechanisms that drive violent behavior are *normal* psychological mechanisms taken to the extreme rather than distorted, psychotic views of reality. This argument may be uncomfortable, since it forces us

to engage with the reasoning and causes that the violent individuals themselves provide, risking a “condoning by understanding” criticism (Fiske, 2013). If *they* are not so very different from *us*, then we cannot write off their claims as those of madmen who resort to violent means.

The second reason for the assumption of dimensional rather than categorical differences is that both the causes and the outcomes exist as dimensional constructs. Although the action of engaging in violence is binary and categorical, attitudes towards violence and intentions to engage in it are not. It is perfectly possible, and demonstrably the case in the existing empirical studies (Thomsen et al., 2014; Stankov, Saucier, & Knežević, 2010), that ordinary people differ in the degree to which they support political violence, and even the degree to which they consider engaging in it (Moskalenko & McCauley, 2009). Dispositional differences, uncertainty, partisan identity strength, and dark world perceptions are also dimensional constructs. Although risky extremes on these dimensions may cluster in vulnerable subgroups, they have the potential to influence most individuals one way or another.

In summary, in order to investigate the relationships in the integrative framework of Chapter 3, these two arguments combined—normal psychological mechanisms and population variation in causes and outcomes—support the use of general populations in studying the central phenomenon.

4.4.3. Complementary, not competing, approaches

Despite these arguments for the value in studying general populations rather than merely the minority of people who actually engage in political violence, the approach has its limitations. As became apparent when considering measurable outcomes, investigating actual violence is out of reach. We have to rely on attitudes and behavioral intentions. Furthermore, while the dominant processes are likely a matter of dimensions, we cannot categorically rule out differences between the general population and radicalized individuals using this approach. For these reasons, we obviously cannot solve the entire puzzle by focusing only on “ordinary” people.

I do not claim that this approach supplants and makes redundant other approaches and other methods. On the contrary, my claim is that this approach offers a venue to strengthen an area of the empirical literature that researchers have considered fragile, namely the testing of drivers and causes. As results of any single approach never translate directly into strong claims about the nature of reality, the results of the findings presented in this dissertation should be compared with those of other approaches such as interviews with radical individuals and historical and field studies. Paper F is an example

of this approach, where we bring two literatures together to discuss the role of mental illness in lone-actor political violence.

4.5. Summary of methods

In this chapter, I have considered a broad framework for understanding and investigating causality in the *potential outcomes framework* and discussed how the data sources fit this framework. I have argued that by focusing on *causes* of effects, we can use survey and laboratory experiments to investigate the situational and dispositional factors. I have argued that we can measure political violence on the level of attitudes and intentions, enabling the use of the general population as participants. I underline my view that this approach offers an important complementary, not competing, venue for testing mechanisms of political violence. In the next chapter, I present the results of the empirical studies and papers of this dissertation.

Chapter 5:

Central Findings

In this chapter, I summarize the central findings from the dissertation as they relate to the research question: *What situational and dispositional factors cause ordinary citizens to support and engage in political violence?* I structure this section through the integrative framework, by first presenting homogeneous and then heterogeneous relationships. After presenting descriptive statistics for the central variables in Section 5.1, the chapter continues, in Section 5.2, with results pertaining to the relationships between and effects of uncertainty, dark world perceptions, and partisan identity strength on political violence. These findings relate to the situational domain of the framework. Next, Section 5.3 discusses the relationships between Big Five personality traits and political violence, and summarizes what traits are overrepresented among those who support and indicate intentions to engage in violence. Section 5.4 goes into the domain of the dark triad personality dimension, presenting findings on how the dark triad traits relate to political violence. Finally, Section 5.5 ties together the situational and dispositional domains by focusing on interactions and interaction effects, which are some of the most important of this dissertation. With the results in place, I end the chapter by summarizing the findings and enabling an answer to the central research question, which I provide in the concluding Chapter 6. While this chapter draws on all papers, it stresses those results that pertain to the integrative framework. For example, the results of Paper E are referenced in three sections, because that paper covers the three fundamental pillars of situation, disposition, and their interaction.

5.1. Descriptive statistics

Before presenting the relationships and correlations between the variables, I provide descriptive statistics for the dependent variables, for the personality variables, and for the situational variables. Table 5 draws from Study 2, as this contains the samples that best resemble the background Danish and United States populations. To illustrate that there is meaningful variation in the measure of intentions to engage in political violence, Figure 2 shows the cumulative distribution functions for the political violence and activism intentions scales for the United States and Danish samples. A fair number of respondents indicate intentions to engage in violence. For example, about one sixth of the samples in both countries have raw scores above 18 on the scale,

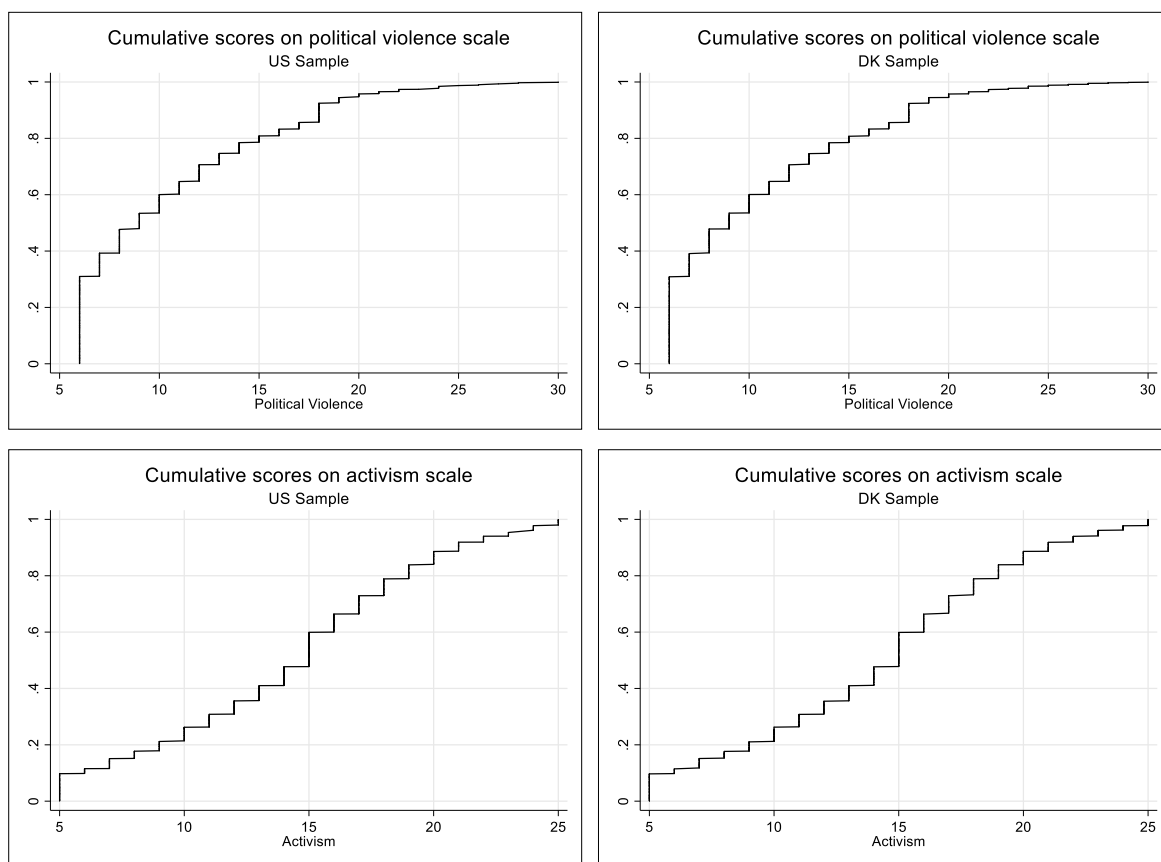
which ranges from 6 to 30, indicating an “average” actual response of “neither unlikely or likely” or above to each of the items. Bearing in mind that the wordings include “encourage others to join violent protests” and “attack police or security forces,” and that respondents are ordinary panel participants, this proportion of people seems high. Only a small proportion of respondents have a score of 24 or above, indicating an average response of “likely” or “highly likely” to the questions.

Table 5. Means and standard deviations for central variables, cross-cultural Study 2

	US (N=1,302)		Denmark (N=1,390)		T-test of difference in means	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	Mean	Standard deviation	Mean	Standard deviation		
Activism	.48	.28	.43	.25	.488***	.19
Political violence	.21	.23	.17	.19	.489***	.19
Uncertainty	.47	.29	.39	.28	.757***	.29
Dark world	.35	.14	.30	.14	7.89***	.30
Neuroticism	.41	.21	.41	.19	.23	.01
Extraversion	.47	.23	.48	.20	-1.35	-.05
Openness	.68	.20	.64	.17	4.95***	.19
Agreeableness	.69	.20	.72	.17	-3.28**	-.13
Conscientiousness	.69	.20	.66	.19	4.34***	.17

Note: Data drawn from Study 2: national representative samples of Danish and US adults. Stars indicate significance levels of two-tailed t-test of difference, * $p < .01$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. All variables scaled 0-1. Cohen's *d* effect size .2 small, .5 medium, .8 large.

Figure 2. Cumulative distributions of scores on the activism and political violence scales, Study 2



Note: Data drawn from Study 2: national representative samples of Danish and US adults.

The comparisons reveal some differences across Denmark and the United States. These are interesting as they reflect real differences across populations, and illustrate the value of investigating the framework across cultural contexts. Compared to Danish respondents, Americans indicate stronger activism and violent political intentions, and somewhat higher levels of uncertainty and perceptions of a dark world. While these differences are only indicative, they point to the possibility that the relationship between uncertainty and dark world perceptions on the one hand, and engagement in political violence on the other, may exist not only across individuals, but also across nations and cultures. Partisan identity strength and the dark triad were not measured cross-culturally, and no country comparisons were possible for these. Table 6 provides descriptive statistics for these variables from Study 3.

Table 6. Means and standard deviations for partisan identity strength and dark triad variables, Study 3

	Partisans (N=1,953)		Independents (N=1,069)		T-test of difference in means	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	Mean	Standard deviation	Mean	Standard deviation		
Partisan identity strength	.66	.23	.58	.26	-8.82***	-.34
Dark triad dimension	.47	.15	.44	.13	-5.11***	-.19
Machiavellianism	.53	.20	.51	.18	-3.57***	-.14
Narcissism	.51	.15	.48	.14	-6.07***	-.23
Psychopathy	.37	.20	.35	.18	-3.41***	-.13

Note: Data drawn from Study 3: study of young adult Americans. Partisan identity strength and dark triad variables scaled 0-1. Stars indicate significance levels of two-tailed t-test of difference, * $p < .01$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. Cohen's *d* effect size .2 small, .5 medium, .8 large.

The means of the dark triad dimension and the Machiavellianism and narcissism traits just around the midpoint of the scale illustrate that they are widely present in the population, even if they are interpersonally problematic. As psychopathy is the most problematic trait, it is not surprising that people, on average, have lower scores on this variable than the others. However, the mean is closer to the midpoint than several of the “normal” Big Five population means. All three scales show substantial variance. It is not surprising that those who identify with either the Democratic party or the Republican party indicate stronger partisan identities than independents. They also score higher on the dark triad general dimension and its specific traits than independents. What may be surprising, however, is that even among independents, the mean identity strength is .58 on a 0-1 scale, indicating what can only be interpreted as a substantial “partisan” identity as independent.

From this demonstration of the empirical variation in the violent intentions scale and the “normality” of the dark triad personality dimension, we can turn to the results of the studies that test the integrative framework.

5.2. Situational factors: Dark mindset, uncertainty, and social identity

5.2.1. Uncertainty

Uncertainty was conceptualized through uncertainty-identity theory as uncertainty about one's self, place in the world, and future. Uncertainty figures in

Papers B, C, and D. I use three different operationalizations throughout. First, I tap self-reported uncertainty through an indication, on a seven-point scale, of the participant's perceived levels of uncertainty. Second, I distil objective uncertainty in Paper B using a reflexive index of a number of uncertainty-inducing indicators in the American National Election Studies. Third, I experimentally induce uncertainty in a two-stage priming procedure in Papers C and D. Tables 7 and 8 summarize seven tests of the relationship between uncertainty and political violence.

Table 7. Summary of results relating uncertainty to political violence

Source	Paper B, Table 2, Study 3 (self-report)	Paper B, Table 5, Study 5 (index)	Paper C, Appendix B, Table 1, Study 1 (DK self-report)	Paper C, Appendix E, Table 1, Study 2 (US experimental)
Dependent variable	Violent intentions	Violent intentions	Violent intentions	Violent intentions
Uncertainty	12.0*** (1.6)	7.0 (9.0)	6.6* (3.2)	3.3* (1.7)
N	2,317	2,489	401	637
Control variables	Big Five (IPIP), age, gender, partisan identity, education	Big Five (TIPI), age, gender, partisan strength, efficacy, education	Dark world perceptions, gender, age	Gender, age, Big Five (IPIP)

Note: Results reported as unstandardized regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. Uncertainty scaled 0-1. Dependent variables coded 0-100. [†] $p < .1$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Table 8. Summary of results relating uncertainty to political violence, continued

Source	Paper C, Appendix E, Table 1, Study 2 (DK experimental)	Paper D, Table 5, Study 4 (experimental)	Paper D, Table 5, Study 4 (experimental)
Dependent variable	Violent intentions	Violent intentions	Support for violence
Uncertainty	2.7 [†] (1.5)	3.0 (2.1)	6.3* (2.7)
N	578	247	247
Control variables	Gender, age, Big Five (IPIP)	Dark world perceptions, dark triad (SD3)	Dark world perceptions, dark triad (SD3)

Note: Results reported as unstandardized regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. Uncertainty scaled 0-1. Dependent variables coded 0-100. [†] $p < .1$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Papers B and C investigate the relationship between self-reported uncertainty and support for and intentions to engage in political violence. The regression reported in Table 2 of Paper B is relevant here. It reports results of a regression of stated intentions to engage in political violence on the direct self-report scores of uncertainty reported by the participants in Study 3 and a range of

control variables. Uncertainty is positively and statistically significantly related to intentions to engage in political violence over and above personality, age, gender, partisan identification, and education. To illustrate the size of the relationship, the predicted difference on violent political intentions between someone with a minimum and someone with a maximum score on uncertainty is 12 percentage points, a relationship larger than that for gender (10 percentage points) or the relationship between uncertainty and activism intentions (8 percentage points). Using the indicator approach and the 2016 American National Elections Studies, however, as reported in Paper B's Table 5, uncertainty is unrelated to the attitude that political violence is legitimate. There may not be a direct relationship between uncertainty and intentions to engage in political violence, making the first finding simply a chance finding. However, this is unlikely given the strong significance of the first result ($p < .001$). Another option is that empirical compromises for the ANES study (detailed in Paper B) mean that the measure of uncertainty becomes a weak measure of the concept, a measurement validity issue. In the Danish Study 1, as referenced in the appendices of Paper C, self-reported uncertainty is also positively and significantly related to intentions to engage in political violence (a predicted difference of 6 percentage points). A third option is that the relationship between uncertainty and political violence depends on other factors, the solution to which lies in increasing model fit, a point taken up in Subsection 5.2.2 and Section 5.5.

Papers C and D use experiments to investigate the question of causality between uncertainty and support for violence as legitimate and effective, and intentions to engage in political violence, respectively. In the laboratory experimental Study 4, participants who received the uncertainty treatment were more supportive of political violence as effective and legitimate than those in the control condition, with scores 6 percentage points higher. Although the coefficient for the effect on intentions to engage in violence was insignificant, the experiment was not powered to detect small effects.

In Paper C (Study 2), I increased power in order to better test the relationship with intentions to engage in violence. This study experimentally manipulated both self-uncertainty and dark world perceptions. In terms of the direct effect of uncertainty, the fact that the control condition for dark world perceptions was "empty" allowed for a direct assessment of the effect of uncertainty on intentions to engage in political violence. This effect was positive in both the American and Danish samples, and the same size as the insignificant coefficient in Study 4 at around 3 points. While this indicates a small effect, that was expected based on the nature of the approach, as discussed in this summary's Chapter 4 on the efficacy of brief primes.

In summary, five of the seven tests supported the assertion of a direct and positive effect of uncertainty on support for and own intentions to engage in political violence. The last two results were positive, but statistically insignificant. The insignificant results came from one underpowered study and a study that used an indirect measure of uncertainty, respectively.

5.2.2. Dark world perceptions

I conceptualized dark world perceptions as the essence of a worldview in which the world is a dangerous and vile place, where group interactions are hostile, where violence is widespread, and where deliberation is ineffective. I operationalized it through a 21-item self-report measure and through an experimental prime where participants were shown bleak images and mock news headlines that told the dark world narrative. Tables 9 and 10 summarize the five main results that investigate the relationship between dark world perceptions and political violence.

Table 9. Summary of results relating dark world perceptions to political violence

Source	Paper C, Appendix B, Table 1, Study 1 (DK self-report)	Paper C, Table 1, Study 2 (US experimental)	Paper C, Table 1, Study 2 (DK experimental)
Dependent variable	Violent intentions	Violent intentions	Violent intentions
Dark world perceptions	59.0*** (9.2)	1.0 (1.2)	1.7 (1.1)
N	401	1,300	1,188
Control variables	Uncertainty, gender, age	Gender, age, Big Five (IPIP)	Gender, age, Big Five (IPIP)

Note: Results reported as unstandardized regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. Dark world perceptions scaled 0-1. Dependent variables coded 0-100. [†] $p < .1$, ^{*} $p < .05$, ^{**} $p < .01$, ^{***} $p < .001$.

Table 10. Summary of results relating dark world perceptions to political violence, continued

Source	Paper D, Table 5, US lab study (experimental)	Paper D, Table 5, US lab study (experimental)
Dependent variable	Support for violence	Violent intentions
Dark world perceptions	2.6 (2.8)	3.8 [†] (2.1)
N	247	247
Control variables	Uncertainty, dark triad (SD3)	Uncertainty, dark triad (SD3)

Note: Results reported as unstandardized regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. Dark world perceptions scaled 0-1. Dependent variables coded 0-100. [†] $p < .1$, ^{*} $p < .05$, ^{**} $p < .01$, ^{***} $p < .001$.

In the Danish Study 1, observed dark world perceptions are positively correlated with intentions to engage in violence. The predicted difference in average scores on the intentions to engage in violence for someone with a minimum score and someone with a maximum score on the dark world measure is 59 points, much larger than the size for uncertainty. Given the results from this factor, which was developed from the intersection of ideology and narrative, it is tempting to interpret it as support for its role as a driver of political violence. Here, it is important to remember that the review indicated that while people engage in political violence with a set of beliefs, the beliefs themselves are not necessarily the cause of the violence. As such, we must investigate this factor experimentally.

The overall takeaway from the promising relationship between dark world perceptions and political violence is one of no support for the assertion that dark world perceptions drive violence. In Paper D, Table 6, there is an indication of a positive effect of the dark mindset treatment on intentions to engage in violence among American college students, but this was unexpected given that there was no effect on the measure of support for violence (Paper D, Table 5). Furthermore, in the cross-cultural Study 2, as reported in Paper C, there was no average causal effect of the dark world treatment on intentions to engage in political violence in either sample.

Returning to the theory behind the concept, the dark world perceptions were hypothesized to be connected to increased uncertainty. Perhaps the effect of the dark world perceptions depends on levels of uncertainty. I investigated this possibility in the studies that included the dark world construct. Results, however, were not straightforward. In the observational Study 1 and laboratory Study 4, dark world perceptions and uncertainty interacted positively to increase one another's effect. This supports the intuitive interpretation that both factors *are* relevant, and that they support each other in driving the process leading to political violence. In the two large survey experiments, however, there was a *negative* and significant interaction between the two experimental treatments, indicating that the largest effect for each factor appeared in the control condition of the other. That is, uncertainty was more effective when there was no attempt to increase dark world perceptions, and vice versa. There are several reasons why these findings are not immediately comparable. First, the dark world perceptions followed different induction strategies, as the control condition of the larger studies was an absence of manipulation rather than the lowering of dark world perceptions that the laboratory study attempted. Second, the laboratory study was not powered to arbitrate on the impact on violent intentions, which I have argued should be smaller than on the attitude scales.

The US and Danish representative samples in Study 2 offer another shot at gauging the relationship between uncertainty and dark world perceptions in predicting violent intentions through the interaction of the manipulation checks for the experimental conditions. These consisted of self-reported uncertainty and the dark world perceptions scale. Table 11 shows that the interaction is positive in both countries, although only marginally significantly so in the Danish sample.

Table 11. Interaction between manipulation checks of uncertainty and dark world perceptions, US and Danish representative samples

	US	Denmark
Dark world perceptions	57.6*** (6.4)	71.3*** (5.0)
Self-uncertainty	-15.6*** (4.3)	-8.1* (3.6)
Dark world perceptions * Uncertainty	63.1*** (11.2)	19.2 [†] (10.3)
N	1,302	1,390

Note: Data drawn from Study 2: national representative samples of Danish and US adults. [†] $p < .1$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. Self-reported uncertainty and dark world perceptions scaled 0-1. Dependent variable violent intentions scaled 0-100.

In summary, there is some support for the assertion of a correlation between dark world perceptions and intentions to engage in political violence. Furthermore, it seems that this correlation is stronger among those with higher levels of self-uncertainty. Support for asserting that dark world perceptions play a causal role in driving violent intentions is lacking.

5.2.3. Partisan identity strength

The third and final situational factor investigated in this dissertation is that of partisan identity strength. This factor was investigated in Studies 3, 5, and 6, the results of which are the theme of Paper E. I operationalized partisan identity strength in a minimalistic way as a simple political position on a left-right scale and in a more comprehensive way by asking several questions about participants' perceived belonging to their political parties. The studies that investigated this factor were all conducted in the United States, and used quasi-representative datasets. Table 12 summarizes the results.

Table 12. Summary of results relating partisan identity strength to political violence

Source	Paper E, Table 1, Study 6 (cross-sectional, single item)	Paper E, Table 3, Study 3 (cross-sectional, index)	Paper E, Table 5, Study 7 (experimental)
Dependent variable	Violent intentions	Violent intentions	Violent intentions
Partisan identity strength	-.26 (1.51)	15.1*** (2.06)	3.28* (1.51)
N	956	1,944	897
Control variables	Big Five (TIPI), gender, age, party identification	Big Five (IPIP), dark triad (SD3), gender, age, party identification	

Note: Results reported as unstandardized regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. Partisan identity strength scaled 0-1. Violent intentions coded 0-100. [†] $p < .1$, ^{*} $p < .05$, ^{**} $p < .01$, ^{***} $p < .001$.

As the focus is on the question of the *strength* of a partisan identity, rather than the specific identity itself, I pooled Republicans and Democrats in the analyses. It is interesting, however, that the two groups differed in their baseline support for political violence. Across the three studies, those who identified as Democrats indicated significantly stronger intentions to engage in violence than Republicans did, with a difference of around four points on a 0-100 scale, even after controlling for the strength of party affiliation. An explanation for this finding may be the nature of the items measuring violent intentions—they concern engagement in *collective* and *social* forms of violence, which may appeal more to the left than the right (Corner & Gill, 2015).

Studies 3 and 6 investigated the correlation between partisan identity strength and intentions to engage in violence, as reported in Study E. Using the minimalist operationalization, there was no relationship; that is, those who were more extreme liberals or conservatives did not indicate stronger intentions to engage in violence than moderates. However, with the comprehensive operationalization, which is closer to the theoretical construct, a stronger partisan identity was positively related to violent intentions, even after controlling for demographic factors and personality. With all control variables, the predicted difference in violent intentions between someone with a maximum score and a minimum score on partisan identity strength was 15 percentage points, similar to the results for self-reported uncertainty.

In Study 5, this relationship was investigated using an experimental design. Here, those in the treatment condition of strong partisan identity, compared to those in the control condition, indicated significantly stronger intentions to engage in political violence on behalf of their party, by a little over 3 percentage points. The size of this effect mirrors that for uncertainty, which fits the expectation of brief manipulations of psychological states such as

these. Perhaps unsurprisingly, as reported in Paper E's Appendix B, the effect was larger for activism intentions (at 8 percentage points). An interpretation of these findings may be that stronger partisan identities are not in themselves strong drivers of violence. As we shall see in Section 5.3 below, drawing on theory regarding personality factors can help us construct improved models.

5.3. Big Five personality and political violence

The main argument for applying the five-dimensional Big Five model of personality was to integrate findings from research on individual factors. From the integrative framework, and the meta-framework that informs it (Mondak et al., 2010), I expected personality differences to exert themselves as direct relationships and to moderate the situational relationships. In the theoretical chapter, I predicted direct negative relationships between political violence and openness to experience and agreeableness. The expected relationships for extraversion, conscientiousness, and neuroticism were theoretically less clear. In the following, I report findings that relate to this question.

5.3.1. A specific constellation of traits

Over the six papers, I investigated the direct relationships between the big five personality traits and support for and intentions to engage in political violence across five datasets. I provide a summary of the results with all personality variables scaled 0-1 and criterion variable coded 0-100 in Table 13.

Only a single study investigated support for violence and the Big Five. Openness and agreeableness were both negatively related to support for violence, as expected. Conscientiousness was the strongest predictor, indicating that trait conformity may be an important factor in attitudes towards violence. The four analyses that investigated intentions to engage in violence showed remarkably similar results, with a total number of respondents of 5,761. In all four studies, agreeableness was negatively related to intentions to engage in political violence, with a relatively narrow band of coefficients between 12.8 and 16.3. This can be interpreted as a conceptual replication of the results regarding trait aggression and interpersonal hostility. In three of the four studies, openness was a significant and negative predictor, with coefficients between 4.5 and 26.0. Interestingly, low openness was the best predictor of violent intentions in the young adult sample, indicating that low openness may be particularly relevant in the young age cohort.

Table 13. Summary of results relating Big Five personality traits to political violence

Source	Paper E, Table 1, Study 6 (TIPI)	Paper B, Table 2, Study 3 (IPIP)	Paper B, Table 5, Study 5 (TIPI)	Paper C, Table 1, Study 2 (US IPIP)	Paper C, Table 1, Study 2, (DK IPIP)
Dependent variable	Violent intentions	Violent intentions	Support for violence	Violent intentions	Violent intentions
Extraversion	17.5*** (3.24)	15.7*** (2.2)	2.6 (1.4)	18.0*** (2.7)	8.3** (2.8)
Agreeableness	-16.3*** (4.56)	-19.3*** (2.7)	-3.0 [†] (1.8)	-12.8*** (3.4)	-13.3*** (3.5)
Conscientiousness	-36.7*** (4.47)	-15.1*** (2.7)	-9.6*** (1.8)	-17.5*** (3.2)	-6.6* (2.9)
Neuroticism	-2.27 (3.94)	3.6 (2.7)	-.8 (1.6)	13.0*** (3.1)	11.9*** (3.1)
Openness	-12.8** (4.07)	-26.0*** (2.7)	-4.0* (1.8)	-4.5 (3.4)	-7.2* (3.3)
N	956	2,317	2,489	1,300	1,188
Control variables	Gender, age, party identification, partisanship	Uncertainty, age, gender, party identification, education	Age, gender, partisan strength, political efficacy, education	Uncertainty, dark world perceptions, gender, age	Uncertainty, dark world perceptions, gender, age

Note: Results reported as unstandardized regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. All personality variables scaled 0-1. Dependent variables coded 0-100. [†] $p < .1$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Conscientiousness and extraversion correlated with violent intentions in all four studies, across different measures of the traits, but with opposite signs. These findings indicate that high extraversion, perhaps due to social dominance and activity, and low conscientiousness, related to disorganization and non-conformity, are important traits in distinguishing those with intentions to engage in violence from those without these intentions.

These findings of the trait pattern of political violence are particularly interesting because the items measuring the traits contain no political content or content related to violence in any way. For example, a conscientiousness item asks people to indicate how much they agree with the statement that they “get chores done right away,” and an openness item asks whether participants “have a vivid imagination.” With a very high degree of certainty, we can conclude that a combination of high extraversion and low levels of agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness characterize those individuals who fail to distance themselves from political violence.

5.3.2. Distinguishing violence from activism and activism intentions

Since activism intentions were always measured alongside violent intentions, it is possible to compare similarities and differences in trait combinations. Answering the question about which factors are involved in political violence requires us to also examine a related type of political behavior. To that end, Table 14 shows the results from the studies reported in Table 11.

The results arguably moderate the “profile” presented in the previous section. Extraversion predicts activism intentions just as well as it does violent intentions, indicating that the relationship may simply be due to stronger intentions to engage in collective protest, and therefore a question of sociality rather than violence per se. To some extent, the same is true for conscientiousness, which is negatively correlated with activism in four of the five samples, albeit with smaller coefficients in three of the studies. In all five studies, openness correlates positively with activism. The same is true for agreeableness in three studies. These results suggest, as hypothesized from the literature review, that openness and agreeableness are the important Big Five traits in distinguishing the *violent* aspect of violent political behavior. Perhaps an extension into subclinical territory is better at distinguishing activist and violent intentions.

Table 14. Summary of results relating Big Five personality traits to political activism

Source	Paper E, Appendix B, Table 1, Study 6 (TIPI)	Paper B, Table 2, Study 3 (IPIP)	Paper B, Table 5, Study 5 (TIPI)	Paper C, Appendix D, Table 1, Study 2 (IPIP)	Paper C, Appendix D, Table 1, Study 2 (IPIP)
Dependent variable	Activism intentions	Activism intentions	Engagement in activism	Activism intentions	Activism intentions
Extraversion	16.9 ^{***} (3.52)	13.8 ^{***} (2.3)	5.0 ^{***} (1.3)	14.9 ^{***} (3.4)	8.1 [*] (3.7)
Agreeableness	1.78 (4.94)	15.5 ^{***} (2.9)	1.3 (1.7)	25.9 ^{***} (4.3)	19.6 ^{***} (4.6)
Conscientiousness	-15.9 ^{**} (4.86)	-54 (2.9)	-3.7 [*] (1.7)	-9.6 [*] (4.0)	-12.4 ^{**} (3.9)
Neuroticism	0.46 (4.27)	-3.6 (2.9)	4.1 ^{**} (1.5)	6.4 ⁺ (3.8)	4.2 (4.1)
Openness	11.1 [*] (4.42)	5.1 [†] (2.9)	13.0 ^{***} (1.8)	16.1 ^{***} (4.2)	12.6 ^{**} (4.3)
N	956	2,317	2,489	1,300	1,188
Control variables	Gender, age, party identification, partisanship	Uncertainty, age, gender, party identification, education	Age, gender, partisan strength, political efficacy, education	Uncertainty, dark world perceptions, gender, age	Uncertainty, dark world perceptions, gender, age

Note: Results reported as unstandardized regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. All personality variables scaled 0-1. Dependent variable coded 0-100. [†] $p < .1$, ^{*} $p < .05$, ^{**} $p < .01$, ^{***} $p < .001$.

5.4. Dark triad personality and political violence

The dark triad dimension and its traits of subclinical psychopathy, narcissism, and Machiavellianism were chosen to complement the Big Five. The dark triad dimension extends normal personality to provide better coverage of interpersonal volatility, lack of empathy, and grandiosity, and gets to the core of factors that studies of particularly lone violent extremists have pointed to as potentially relevant in understanding political violence.

5.4.1. A dark profile

In four studies (Studies 3, 4, 6, and 7), I investigated the empirical reality of the relationship between the dark triad and political violence. The results figure in Papers D and E. Table 15 summarizes the results.

Table 15. Summary of results relating the dark triad to political violence

	Paper D, Table 5 Study 4 (SD3)	Paper E, Table 1, Study 6 (Dirty Dozen)	Paper E, Table 3, Study 7 (SD3)	Paper D, Table 5, Study 4 (SD3)
Dependent variable	Violent intentions	Violent intentions	Violent intentions	Support for violence
Model I: Dark triad dimension				
Dark triad dimension	58.7*** (10.6)	63.2*** (3.81)	98.3*** (3.83)	79.1*** (13.3)
Model II: Dark triad traits				
Machiavellianism	-1.4 (7.9)	23.3*** (4.75)	17.4*** (3.29)	30.0*** (10.2)
Narcissism	2.8 (7.8)	12.1** (4.07)	5.92 (4.11)	-2.0 (9.9)
Psychopathy	58.6*** (9.0)	29.7*** (4.98)	71.4*** (3.71)	49.6*** (12.8)
N	247	956	1944	247
Control variables	Dark world perceptions, uncertainty	Gender, age, party, identity strength, Big Five (TIPI)	Gender, age, party, identity strength, Big Five (IPIP)	Dark world perceptions, uncertainty

Note: Results reported as unstandardized regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. All personality variables scaled 0-1. Dependent variable violent intentions coded 0-100. Support variables scaled 1-5. † $p < .1$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

The central finding is the consistent relationship across the three studies and different measures of the dark triad between higher levels of the dark triad and stronger intentions to engage in political violence as well as support for

political violence. If I split the dimension into the three traits, it becomes apparent that psychopathy and Machiavellianism, but not narcissism, drive this relationship. Among college students, in a quasi-representative population sample, and in a broad sample of young adults, these findings replicate.

Table 16. Summary of results relating dark triad traits to political activism

	Paper D, Appendix C, Table 2, Study 4 (SD3)	Paper E, Appendix B, Table 1, Study 6 (Dirty Dozen)	Paper E, Appendix B Table 4, Study 3 (SD3)
Dependent variable	Activism intentions	Activism intentions	Activism intentions
Model I: Dark triad dimension			
Dark triad dimension	-8.1 (14.0)	44.4*** (4.48)	64.0*** (4.32)
Model II: Dark triad traits			
Machiavellianism	-14.2 (10.8)	9.86 ⁺ (5.57)	32.37*** (3.82)
Narcissism	18.0 ⁺ (10.5)	26.4*** (4.78)	20.14*** (4.77)
Psychopathy	-9.1 (12.2)	6.11 (5.85)	8.35 ⁺ (4.31)
N	247	956	1944
Control variables	Dark world perceptions, uncertainty	Gender, age, party identification, identity strength, Big Five (TIPI)	Gender, age, party identification, identity strength, Big Five (IPIP)

Note: Results reported as unstandardized regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. All personality variables scaled 0-1. Dependent variable activism intentions coded 0-100. ⁺ $p < .1$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

As with the Big Five, the comparison with activism is relevant. As Table 16 shows, dark triad personality is related to stronger activism intentions in the two large studies, but with smaller coefficients than for violent intentions. It is surprising that the dark triad, with its core of callous malevolence and egoism, is positively related to political activism, which is often thought of as having altruistic elements. The trait analysis reveals that narcissism and Machiavellianism, but not psychopathy, contribute uniquely to this relationship. Perhaps activism provides a way to focus on oneself and a feeling of power that is attractive to some.

The conclusion from the direct relationships between the dark triad and violent intentions is that the dark triad dimension, and the trait of subclinical psychopathy, as expected, were strongly related to intentions to engage in violence. The psychopathy trait distinguishes those with activism intentions from others who indicate only violent intentions.

5.5. Integrating the model

The third pillar of explaining political behavior consists of the interactions between dispositions and situations, or personality and environment. While there are many potential interactions between the personality dimensions and the environmental factors in my model, I focus here on those indicated in my literature review, specifically the interactions of openness to experience with uncertainty, and the dark triad with partisan identity strength. These interactions are the primary focus of Papers B and E. I summarize the results below.

5.5.1. Openness, extraversion, and uncertainty

Paper B investigates the first focus, namely the interaction between two operationalizations of uncertainty and Big Five personality in explaining support for and intentions to engage in political violence. In the large study of young American adults (Study 3), I investigated the hypothesis by interacting self-reported uncertainty with the Big Five factors, while controlling for gender, age, education, and party identification. Paper B concludes that openness does indeed interact negatively with uncertainty to predict intentions to engage in violence ($b=-40.1$, $SE=9.1$, $p<.001$). I make a conceptual replication of this result using the 2016 American National Election Studies with *support* for political violence as the dependent measure. The coefficient is similar at four times the standard error ($b=-2.0$, $SE=.51$, $p<.001$). In both studies, neuroticism and uncertainty negatively interact to predict violent intentions and support for violence. Extraversion interact positively with uncertainty to predict intentions to engage in violence. Using local regression and binning, I show that whereas uncertainty is unrelated to political violence for those with high levels of openness, the relationship between uncertainty and political violence is driven by individuals with low openness scores. High cognitive flexibility and tolerance for abstract rather than concrete thinking, and to some extent a disposition towards positive emotionality and introversion, are protective factors for the negative effects of uncertainty.

Unpublished data from Study 2 provide the possibility to replicate the relationships between personality and uncertainty in predicting intentions to engage in political violence in population representative samples and a first test of the causal nature of this relationship. The Danish representative sample of Study 2 enables a test of the cross-cultural validity of this relationship. Table 17 reports the results of four regressions. The first replicates the interactions between uncertainty and the personality traits of openness, neuroticism, and extraversion, and finds support for the role of openness and extraversion. The third model extends the results to the Danish case, and supports the roles of openness and extraversion in moderating the uncertainty-violence link. The

coefficients in Denmark are smaller than in the United States, and only the moderating role of extraversion is robust to inclusion of the insignificant terms from the original analysis, as evidenced in Table 18.

The second and fourth models interact the personality traits with experimentally induced uncertainty, and fail to find support for asserting that openness moderates the *causal* effect of uncertainty in either country. Surprisingly, in the Danish sample, there was a significant interaction between extraversion and induced uncertainty, but in the opposite direction from what was expected. This result means that we should be careful in asserting causality in this area. The uncertainty prime was weak, and the study is underpowered to detect possible causal interaction if it were there. However, a stronger manipulation of uncertainty that induces more than a small and transient increase in uncertainty poses ethical problems. The way forward may not be in designing stronger manipulations of uncertainty, but in exploiting natural events that impact levels of uncertainty (see, for example, Kakkar & Sivanathan, 2017). These results show the limits of survey experiments, and point the way towards field experimental methods.

Table 17. Replication of moderating relationship between observed uncertainty and openness, extraversion, and neuroticism

	Model I: Observed uncertainty (US sample)	Model II: Manipulated uncertainty (US sample)	Model III: Observed uncertainty (DK sample)	Model IV: Manipulated uncertainty (DK sample)
Self-reported uncertainty	32.4*** (9.0)	-	22.83* (9.0)	-
Uncertainty treatment	-	-1.1 (5.6)	-	1.9 (5.6)
Neuroticism	21.9*** (5.5)	21.4 (4.2)	11.9* (5.0)	12.8** (4.3)
Extraversion	2.8 (5.1)	16.7*** (3.9)	1.9 (4.5)	12.2** (3.9)
Openness	9.7 (6.0)	-10.4 (4.6)*	-1.0 (4.9)	-12.8** (4.5)
Uncertainty by				
Neuroticism	-14.6 (9.1)	2.2 (5.9)	-12.1 (9.1)	2.0 (5.9)
Extraversion	28.0*** (8.6)	-1.6 (5.4)	16.0 [†] (8.9)	-11.8* (5.6)
Openness	-35.4*** (10.1)	2.6 (6.3)	-20.4* (9.9)	4.7 (6.3)
Gender (male)	8.4*** (1.2)	8.7*** (1.2)	7.9*** (1.0)	6.9*** (1.1)
N	1,302	1,302	1,188	1,188

Note: Note: Data drawn from Study 2: national representative samples of Danish and US adults. [†] $p < .1$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. Uncertainty and personality variables scaled 0-1. Dependent variable intentions to engage in political violence scaled 0-100.

Table 18. Replication of moderating relationship between observed uncertainty and Big Five personality traits, including terms that were insignificant in previous analyses

	Model I: Observed uncertainty (US sample)	Model II: Observed uncertainty (DK sample)
Self-reported uncertainty	33.6** (12.1)	41.0*** (11.6)
Neuroticism	13.3* (5.7)	8.32 (5.02)
Extraversion	2.72 (5.09)	2.83 (4.5)
Openness	11.1 (6.3)	-3.28 (5.0)
Agreeableness	-7.44 (6.01)	3.01 (5.2)
Conscientiousness	-11.6 (6.3)	-8.60 (4.57)
Uncertainty by		
Neuroticism	-10.4 (9.5)	-10.9 (9.1)
Extraversion	31.7*** (8.6)	19.61* (8.9)
Openness	-28.8** (10.6)	-3.97 (10.3)
Agreeableness	-11.6 (10.6)	3.01 (5.2)
Conscientiousness	-5.97 (10.6)	3.25 (9.5)
Age	-0.24*** (.04)	-.02 (.03)
Gender (male)	7.7*** (1.2)	6.20*** (1.09)
N	1,302	1,390

Note: Note: Data drawn from Study 2: national representative samples of Danish and US adults. † $p < .1$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. Uncertainty and personality variables scaled 0-1. Dependent variable intentions to engage in political violence scaled 0-100.

5.5.2. Partisan social identity and dark triad

I discuss the subclinical personality dimensions and partisan social identity in Paper E of the dissertation. In Chapter 3, I argued that a focus on the dark triad is warranted because although strong partisanship is a core constituent of ordinary political life, only a small minority support and actually engage in violence. I suggested that individual differences in personality might be able to distinguish those partisans who support violence from those who do not.

I use the three studies of Paper E to leverage this question. In the first two studies, I vary the measurement of the dark triad (as either the dirty dozen or the short dark triad) and the measurement of partisan social identity (using a minimalist or more comprehensive approach). In the third study, I experimentally induce a strong partisan identity. Table 19 summarizes the results of each of these studies for the dark triad dimension personality dimension (Model I) and for each of the three dark traits (Model II).

Table 19. Summary of results for the interaction between dark triad dimension score (Model I) or dark triad traits (Model II) and partisan identity in predicting violent intentions

	Study 6	Study 3	Study 8
Model I: Dark triad dimension			
Partisan strength	-2.19* (1.01)	-22.3*** (6.43)	-7.73* (3.49)
Dark triad dimension	51.3*** (5.94)	39.11*** (10.3)	70.46*** (7.09)
Partisan strength by			
Dark triad dimension	6.88** (2.64)	80.52*** (13.1)	24.58** (8.90)
Model II: Dark triad traits			
Partisan strength	-1.49 (1.03)	-20.9*** (6.99)	-7.74* (3.86)
Machiavellianism	1.09 (8.87)	-34.6*** (9.13)	4.00 (7.47)
Narcissism	23.5*** (7.10)	0.55 (10.0)	7.71 (6.33)
Psychopathy	30.0*** (7.87)	78.9*** (9.52)	56.50*** (7.52)
Partisan strength by			
SD3 Machiavellianism	13.32** (4.60)	73.4*** (12.6)	.85 (9.35)
SD3 Narcissism	-6.97* (3.72)	7.33 (13.9)	13.36 (8.21)
SD3 Psychopathy	-0.37 (4.00)	-13.9 (12.9)	11.31 (9.37)
Observations	956	1944	897
Controls	Gender, age, party identification, Big Five (TIPI)	Gender, age, party identification, Big Five (IPIP)	

Note: Results reported as unstandardized regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. Partisan identity strength scaled 0-1. All personality variables scaled 0-1. Violent intentions scaled 0-100. + $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

The second row of models in Table 19 tests whether each individual trait has unique explanatory power. In the cross-sectional studies, but not the experimental one, Machiavellianism interacts positively with partisan identity strength to predict violent intentions. Although the scheming of Machiavellianism seems to be relevant in distinguishing partisans who see themselves as capable of violence from others, it is the common core of these traits, which consists of callous malevolence, rather than the particulars of any one trait, that is most problematic in driving violent intentions. Intentions to engage in political violence from the two big parties in the United States seems driven by a particular kind of partisans: those who are callous, mistrusting of others, and scheming and manipulating. In the appendices of Paper E, I find this interaction using activism intentions as the outcome for two of the three studies,

although the coefficient is similar in the experimental Study 8 only. This finding suggests darker elements to ordinary activism. I discuss these parallels in the next chapter.

5.6. Summary of findings

This chapter has reviewed the main findings of the studies in this dissertation as they relate to the integrative framework developed in Chapter 3, based on the literature review presented in Chapter 2. I summarize the main points in three brief paragraphs.

First, the results indicate that uncertainty drives political violence. The ideological factor of dark world perceptions is correlated with political violence, but not causally so. Partisan social identity strength, operationalized as identification with either of the two big parties in the United States, drives intentions to engage in political violence.

Second, personality is important in explaining the variance in support for and intentions to engage in political violence. In particular, the role of Big Five personality factors of agreeableness and openness to experience, the dark triad personality dimension, and the psychopathy trait were supported empirically. Furthermore, the pattern of relationships enables a distinction between engagement in political activism and violence.

Third, situation and disposition interacted to predict political violence. Openness to experience and extraversion dampened the relationship between uncertainty and political violence. This result was replicated in an American and a Danish sample, but there was not support for asserting this relationship as causal. In three studies, across operationalizations and study designs, dark triad personality moderated the mechanism that linked partisan identity strength to intentions to engage in political violence.

In the next, and final, chapter of this summary, I answer the research question, discuss limitations of the findings, and consider implications for the research field as well as for policy practice in the area of countering political violence and violent extremism.

Chapter 6:

Discussion and Conclusion

I began this dissertation with the puzzle of why some people support and engage in political violence in otherwise peaceful and democratic countries. To shed some light on this puzzle, I asked the research question: *What situational and dispositional factors cause ordinary citizens to support and engage in political violence?* In the preceding chapters, I reviewed the existing literature, proposed an integrative theoretical framework and methodological approach, and presented the central results of the studies and papers in my dissertation. We are now in a position to attempt an answer to the research question. This is the goal of this concluding chapter of the summary.

First, however, I want to revisit some of the limitations and possible criticisms of my approach to answering the question already hinted at in the methods chapter. I do this in Section 6.1 before revisiting the now empirically informed integrative framework in Section 6.2. In Sections 6.3 and 6.4, I consider implications for practice and suggest a future research agenda to address unanswered questions. Although the research in this dissertation is basic, as opposed to applied, there is a strong push for evidence-based interventions in this area. Therefore, I consider what lessons this research holds for interventions. Finally, I conclude this summary in Section 6.5.

6.1. Limitations

6.1.1. Participants

I specifically did not sample the participants in my empirical studies with vulnerability to political violence in mind. Rather, participants were ordinary adult citizens, college students, and members of survey company panels. In the methods chapter, I argued a priori that studying “ordinary” individuals could offer valuable insight into processes and mechanisms that only a small minority carry to the extreme. I argued for the assumption that those who engage in violence are not *categorically* different from those who do not. We can now reconsider this assumption a posteriori.

Lack of variation in the central outcome measures would indicate a violation of this assumption. This would essentially make impossible any meaningful analysis of the data. As the results chapter showed, this was not the case. While most people indicated low support for and intentions to engage in violence, there were substantial differences.

Another way in which the assumption would be violated would be if the phenomenological experience of the dispositional and situational factors I have investigated differed categorically, and not just dimensionally, between my participants and at-risk groups. Two points are relevant here. First, the general population and therefore the people directly sampled are intrinsically relevant in order to answer the research question, which explicitly concerned otherwise ordinary people. The puzzle concerns why these people can, even fleetingly, come to support or consider engaging in political violence themselves.

The second point is empirical. The theory that informed the relationships and mechanisms I investigated were built on approaches and studies of violent extremists and groups that *do* engage in violence. I found empirical support for most of the hypothesized relationships, which provides further backing of the assumption of normal, not disordered, psychological mechanisms. Furthermore, as Paper 6 shows, understanding the process of political violence and violent extremism as a continuum on which we can, in principle, order everyone solves the issue of the false dichotomy between “ordinary” people and the essentialized other.

6.1.2. Methods

In the methods section (Chapter 4), I argued that we should always imagine the ideal type design, and then find the best approximate design given real-world constraints. Throughout the summary, I have focused on designs capable of arbitrating between causal relationships and correlates of political violence. While I included an experimental element when possible, not all studies relied on experimental designs. Some of this can be explained from a consideration of what factors can be experimentally manipulated. For example, individual dispositions are *per definition* relatively stable constructs. Even if elements of traits, such as anxiety or social confidence, could be manipulated, what we manipulated was more likely to be the more proximate states and moods rather than the background traits that codetermine them.

Other analyses which rely on cross-sectional data find backing in more pragmatic arguments. For example, the 2016 American National Election Study (Study 5) enabled me to investigate the interaction between uncertainty and personality in a high-quality, population representative American sample. This provided the strongest generalizability of any study in this dissertation, but came at the cost of internal validity. Although the issue remains, I believe the trade-off was worthwhile. It showed us that across operationalizations and measures, uncertainty interacted with openness and extraversion to explain political violence. Another tradeoff I had to make was between increasing the

strength of the experimental primes of uncertainty, dark world perceptions, and partisan identity on the one hand, and ethical limitations on the other. I have based my experimental primes on the existing literature, in order to induce only transient psychological changes. While these were enough for causal effects to emerge in large samples, they may not be sufficient for reliably uncovering interaction relationships. Instead of constructing stronger primes that would potentially inflict more harm than ethically defensible, I argued that exploiting natural experiments could pave a way forward.

Another methodological limitation is my reliance on survey designs. The strengths of surveys include the possibility for high-powered analyses, transparency and replicability of results, and access to a heterogeneous population. However, important limitations include loss of control of the research situation, risk of inattention, and response bias. Questions concerning political violence may prompt a socially desirable response set, hiding those who actually support or consider engagement in political violence. One solution to this problem is using methods that increase anonymity by masking the respondent's answers (Blair, Imai, & Lyall, 2014). For example, the "list experiment" shows people a number of statements and asks them to indicate the number they support. Importantly, participants do not indicate *which* statements they support, just how many. Unbeknownst to the participants, half of the sample receive a list of statements that excludes the true question of interest, which in this case could be support for political violence. By comparing the average number of statements the participants support, the researcher can estimate support for the statement of interest. The problem with this method is that it attenuates power and is incompatible with multi-item scales. Had the central question concerned levels of support for violence in the population, this approach would have been adequate. As I focus on relationships and mechanisms, I evaluated this trade-off as unfavorable to the goal of answering the research question.

6.1.3. General factors, not specific ones

I used two explicit guidelines in the review and theory chapters of this dissertation in order to construct the framework of political violence. First, the factors should be conceptualized at the broadest level of analysis possible. Rather than focusing on any single reason for engaging in violence, the framework is supposed to describe general pathways. Second, the level of abstraction of the factors that were identified should remain psychologically relevant, and therefore operationalizable in specific studies. For example, rather than settling on specific negative life events, such as job loss or discrimination, I focused on

the experience of uncertainty that these events conjure. Simultaneously, I conceptualized uncertainty as that which is specific to an individual's sense of self, place in the world, and future, in an attempt to keep the operationalization psychologically real, emphasizing face validity.

My studies are limited by the extent that such general-level factors can provide knowledge on the actual process towards political violence. Intuitively, in any given case, the constructs will be "filled" with particular events. For example, there will be one or a set of specific negative life events such as divorce or discrimination that cause pervasive uncertainty, a particular social identity that has become politicized, and a tangible narrative or ideology that legitimizes violence. Although it is not possible to detail actual cases based on the work conducted for this dissertation, this was not my goal. Rather, the point was to extract and show the empirical viability of these factors that crop up in the literature on political violence. Furthermore, several of the approaches that the factors and the framework rest on are built from actual cases of violence, tempering the impact of this limitation. Work is underway to investigate *kinds* of uncertainty and support for violence in samples of the normative population.

Another criticism is that although the framework attempts to span a broad group of relevant constructs, it is not exhaustive. I have not investigated other potentially relevant situational factors such as within-group roles, or dispositional factors such as sadism. This criticism is perfectly fair, but can be leveled at most models that attempt to balance complexity and comprehensiveness to provide an integrative understanding of the world. It does not invalidate the framework. Rather, it reminds us that our models of the world will always be incomplete, and points to the importance of expanding the framework in future research.

6.2. Answering the research question: The integrative framework revisited

With the limitations of the approach revisited in light of the empirical results, we can move on to a revision of the integrative framework and to consider the benefit of this work. I believe this dissertation has added to our cumulative knowledge on the processes of political violence theoretically, methodologically, and empirically.

Theoretically, my dissertation has integrated different theoretical approaches by showing how similar mechanisms are arrived at through different scientific traditions, including political science, social psychology, and anthropology. While the strict stage theories are mostly a thing of the past (Bartlett & Miller, 2012), similarities between such constructs as uncertainty, identity,

and ideology occur across approaches. From these factors, I have built an empirically informed and falsifiable framework for understanding when individuals come to support or engage in political violence.

Methodologically, I have shown the viability of bridging the gap between the radicalization literature and the literature on political protest and behavior research. I have argued (though I am admittedly not the first to do so) that considering validity as something that is constructed across a research program, not just as a characteristic of a single study, unlocks the use of multiple methods, including large-scale surveys and experiments on population representative samples. By viewing the central constructs and outcomes as dimensions, and with a triangulation of support, behavioral intentions, and existing studies of actual behavior, I hope to have shown that a complementary, not competing, approach can drive us further in this area.

Empirically and substantially, I have provided a comprehensive mapping of the factors I identified as potential drivers and correlates within the broader domains of person and situation. No empirical strategy is perfect, and there is future work to be done in mapping the interactions. However, I have shown that integrating situation and disposition is necessary if we are to understand how some people come to support, indicate intentions to engage in, and ultimately participate in political violence.

From these contributions, we can revisit the hypotheses from the theoretical framework. Table 20 shows the pattern of associations between the situational and personality factors and their interactions in predicting support for and intentions to engage in political violence.

With these contributions considered, I believe an answer to the research question is possible. We can understand the situational and dispositional factors that cause ordinary citizens to support and engage in political violence through the three pillars of explanations for political behavior. First, a personality structure characterized by interpersonal hostility, unfriendliness, closed-mindedness, and dark elements of callousness and scheming disposes individuals to embrace violence. Second, situations that induce uncertainty related to one's sense of self and place in the world and a strengthening of one's partisan identity drive individuals towards violence. Those who support violence often hold a worldview where the world is dark, dangerous, and hostile, but this factor does not in itself drive violence. Third, and binding the factors together, is the person-situation interaction. A disposition towards social introversion and openness to new experiences and abstract ideas shields individuals from negative uncertainty. Interpersonal cynicism, callousness, and manipulation of others magnifies the effect of strong partisan identities on the

capacity for violence. While this answer is based on studies of general populations, it finds support in studies of the small number of individuals who end up turning to violence.

Table 20. Summary of hypotheses from integrative framework

	Nature of association	Sign of association	Outcome measure
Situation			
Uncertainty	Correlational and causal	Positive	Support and intentions
Dark world perceptions	Correlational only	Positive	Support and intentions
Partisan identities	Correlational and causal	Positive	Intentions
Person			
Extraversion	Correlational	Positive	Intentions
Agreeableness	Correlational	Negative	Intentions
Conscientiousness	Correlational	Negative	Support and intentions
Neuroticism	Correlational	Positive	Intentions
Openness	Correlational	Negative	Intentions
Dark triad personality	Correlational	Positive	Support and intentions
Machiavellianism	Correlational	Positive	Support and intentions
Narcissism	Correlational	No association	Support and intentions
Psychopathy	Correlational	Positive	Support and intentions
Moderation			
Uncertainty and dark world	Correlational Causal	Positive No support	Support and intentions
Uncertainty and openness	Correlational only	Negative	Support and intentions
Uncertainty and extraversion	Correlational only	Positive	Intentions
Partisan identities and dark triad	Correlational and causal	Positive	Intentions

This response to the research question has implications for the general population, for the subpopulation that is vulnerable to radicalization, and in terms of the general principles for policy to counter political violence in society. I discuss these in turn.

6.3. Implications

6.3.1 Implications for the general population

When considering the implications of this dissertation for the general population, the picture can seem rather bleak. Increased political polarization, not just in North America but in Europe and the rest of the world, is conceptually closely related to stronger partisan social identities, and reconciling differences appears more difficult than ever. Despite economic growth, inequalities in access to education, healthcare, and the job market increase marginalization and the risk of negative trigger events that facilitate support for aggressive and even violent politics. Social media platforms that were praised in their infancy for increasing the scope for democratic deliberation are now associated with the rise of fake news, conspiracy theories, and dark narratives. Examples include the impact of the alt-right, the narrative of distrust of established authorities, and the difficulty in halting the spread of extremist religious propaganda and extreme manifestos online.

The research carried out in this dissertation invites us to consider how these developments influence and feed into each other, and establishes the connection between these and the individuals who carry out acts of political violence. Work that seeks to counter the negative effects of these developments should be welcomed. The results indicate that programs should seek to reduce uncertainty-inducing negative trigger events rather than attack dark narratives of fake news. Similarly, work to facilitate deliberation across political divides between broad groups in society, rather than targeting only those few people who actually commit violence, is needed to attempt to alleviate the risks of these population-level processes.

Although the present research focused on the individual, the results point to the impact of more general factors in society. Sociologists writing about societies in late modernity such as Giddens (1991), Beck (1992), and Bauman (2000) pointed out decades ago that our current globalized capitalistic system carries with it enormous stresses to the individual that resemble the factors investigated here. These issues target the individual's construction of their identity, the loss of predictability and increased uncertainty brought about by an ever-increasing acceleration of social processes, and a risk of a resurgence of extreme parochial groups readily available for those who fall off the (band)-wagon of progress. As such, while this work stresses the danger inherent in these factors, it also points to a wider social critique in the search for solutions.

6.3.2. Policies for the vulnerable population

Shifting the focus from the macro-level gears of society, the results of this study have implications for subpopulations that are more vulnerable to engaging in violence. An important distinction here is between “upstream” prevention targeting those who may later radicalize to political violence, and “downstream” interventions available for people who have already engaged in, or planned to engage in, political violence (Romaniuk, 2015). We cannot assume that the processes and mechanisms that facilitate violence can simply be reversed to rewind the process (Schmid, 2013). The present research has the strongest implications for upstream programs. Overall, the factors revealed by the review and empirically tested in this research indicate what we might call “soft” interventions, funneling individuals towards stable, ordinary lives and a consistent sense of identity and self, rather than “hard” interventions meant to scare people away from radical groups and behavior.

One potentially effective kind of intervention is mentoring schemes, where frequent one-on-one sessions with trained mentors aim to provide support for those at risk of seeking support in other, more problematic ways. For example, in the Danish model of anti-radicalization, the focus on purging extreme views takes a backseat to a focus on basic, general life skills and help in creating a scaffold for the target individual to re-embed into society in a positive way (Bertelsen, 2015, p. 246). While targeting the root causes of uncertainty, dark narratives, and strong and rigid social identities requires society-level changes, helping mitigate the negative consequences of these factors does not have to. School or community programs that train the ability to consider different perspectives and that practice empathy and an appreciation of otherness also find support in the results of this dissertation. Such programs are already used in several countries (e.g. RAN, 2017; Liht & Savage, 2013), and may support individuals in tempering problematic behavioral dispositions.

6.3.3. General principles of countering political violence

Another issue is how to handle the schism between mental health and mental illness. The literature review showed a consensus that explanations for participation in political violence should predominantly be found in normal psychological mechanisms. At the same time, my results indicate that subclinical dark triad personalities are overrepresented among those that support and intend to engage in violence, and that mental health issues are overrepresented among a sub-group of those who engage in political violence.

In Paper F, we approach this theme from the perspective of forensic science. While the majority of lone-actor extremists do not seem to suffer from diagnosable mental health issues (Corner & Gill, 2015), about half are socially

isolated (Gill, Horgan, & Deckert, 2014). We find that a pattern of conflictual social interaction is particularly relevant for those who are never truly integrated into social groups, the peripheral lone actors. Psychopathic traits, aggression, cynicism, and apathy are overrepresented in this category of individuals (Lindekilde, Malthaner, & O'Connor, 2018). This description fits the negative trait descriptors of low agreeableness, high psychopathy, and Machiavellianism.

From the results on normal psychological mechanisms to the similarities between population studies and studies of hard-core lone-actor extremists, we cannot continue working with sharp categorical differences in this field. As we argue in Paper F, taking a dimensional perspective on the mental health issue of political violence is not the same as suggesting that we are all one negative trigger event and an adverse narrative away from engaging in violence. It does seek an acceptance and understanding—not condoning—of how even the worst perpetrators are in some ways also ordinary individuals.

In practice, this point translates into a call for work that discards the “silo” approach to prevention, which categorizes individuals through a systematic procedure for receiving interventions from different institutions. These could be incarceration, psychiatric care, social services, or surveillance by police and intelligence services. Alternatives to the silo approach are already underway in several places. In the United Kingdom and the Nordic countries, for example, work is ongoing to facilitate inter-agency cooperation and create cross-institutional working groups on the processes of political violence (Van Dongen, 2010).

6.3. Future research

The six papers, seven empirical studies, and this summary report have aimed to establish the principles of the integrative framework and empirically test its pathways. While I hope to have done this, I shall not pretend that the work is over. In this section, I suggest four venues for future studies that build upon this research agenda.

First, there is a need for more interaction studies that investigate the hypothesized relations and mechanisms in the framework. This is true for both the interaction of dispositional factors with situations, but also for interactions within domains. For example, Brandstätter and Opp (2014) find that the multiplicative of extraversion and neuroticism, the so-called *reciprocity orientation*, predicts engagement in political protest. Extraversion and neuroticism are inconsistently related to political violence, and perhaps this approach can aid in shedding more light on their role. Another question concerns the intersection of uncertainty and partisan identity strength. An exploration of the

background factors, the causes of the causes, is potentially fruitful. For example, it is relevant to investigate what uncertainty-inducing events best predict support for violence. More complex modeling of relationships also provides a path forward, for example through structural equation modeling or investigation of non-linear relationships, although such models carry limitations of their own (e.g. Steiger, 2007).

A second agenda is in capturing the domain of behavior, not just support and intentions. One option lies in utilizing existing datasets on those who have engaged in violence to attempt conceptual replications of the findings in this summary. For example, the START dataset of Profiles of Individual Radicalization in the United States (PIRUS) offers a range of individual-level attributes and events for 2,100 violent and non-violent extremists in the United States. Work on operationalizing the central factors in the framework would be required, and could proceed similar to that of measuring uncertainty in the ANES.

A third path is to conduct evaluation studies of upstream and downstream interventions. This is already a focus for national and supranational actors (RAN, 2017). Testing the viability of the measures used in this research could more clearly establish the translatability of research to practice.

Finally, future research ought to investigate how we can best facilitate the inter-agency cooperation that I have suggested as necessary for an integrative and dimensional approach. Legal, practical, and professional obstacles to such cooperation exist, but there is also much practical knowledge on how to surmount these among practitioners in countries with existing cooperation. A more explorative approach seems indicated to tap and systematize this knowledge before lessons learned can be translated to other countries.

6.4. Concluding remarks

I began this summary with the observation that acts of political violence in Europe and the United States were increasing in frequency. This led to the puzzle of why ordinary individuals engage in violence, a review of existing literatures on the subject, and a proposal for an integrative model that could incorporate the similarities observed in the literature. While this endeavor has required trade-offs, I believe they are worthwhile. The empirical studies have shown that this approach *can* yield results, and the current chapter has argued their implications for practice. In the theoretical, methodological, and empirical approach, and in discussing the implications, I have insisted that broad integration is superior to parochial reliance on solitary perspectives, fields, and traditions. It is my hope that this broad integration inches us closer to a cumulative science of violent political protest.

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Summary

Extreme political animosity and hostility that spill over into threats and use of violence have become commonplace occurrences in Europe and the United States. Whether the phenomena manifest themselves as violence at political rallies in the United States, as clashes between protesters and repressive police in European countries, or as religious or single-issue violence against civilians, mass and social media platforms appear satiated with narratives of political violence. Although obvious differences exist in the tactics and cultural and political significance of these incidences, one general element is that violence exists as an extreme, but always potential, action alternative in a host of modern political conflicts. In this dissertation, I attempt to shift focus from the specifics of each occurrence to ask:

What situational and dispositional factors cause ordinary citizens to support and engage in political violence?

The dissertation takes up calls from researchers for more psychological and empirical work on how individuals and groups come to view political violence as a legitimate and viable action alternative. I combine a personality and social psychological approach with insights from forensic psychiatry in a political psychology framework to build and empirically test a general model of radicalization to political violence. The dissertation comprises six papers based on original and secondary population representative datasets and methods that span from literature review to survey designs to laboratory experiments.

I summarize my results as follows. A review of the existing empirical literature on psychological mechanisms in radicalization finds that theories center on a handful of relevant factors. An overall distinction is between factors that impact the individual independently of the situation (dispositions) and factors that impact the individual from the outside (situations). The empirical studies take this dichotomy as their starting point. They test the role of normal and subclinical personality traits as well as situations of high uncertainty, perceptions of the world as dark and dangerous, and strong partisan social identities. Cross-sectional studies show that the dispositions of openness to experience and agreeableness inhibit support for political violence. Furthermore, those with a “dark triad” personality structure of callous malevolence indicate stronger support. Through laboratory and survey experiments, I show that induced self-uncertainty and strong partisan identities causally increase intentions to violently defend one’s group against political opponents.

Combining these perspectives, I investigate hypothesized interactions between situation and disposition. I find that openness to experience inhibits and extraversion facilitates the relationship between self-uncertainty and support for and intentions to engage in political violence. Furthermore, the dark triad personality structure strengthens the effect of strong partisan identities on intentions to engage in political violence, but also in political activism.

Informed by these results, I end with a more specific focus on applications by arguing for a paradigm shift in research and practice on countering political violence. This shift involves conceptualizing the involved factors as broad dimensions, not discrete categories. I identify the path forward as one of significantly closer cooperation between social services, the health care system, and the police, and one of including research principles in practice if we are to reduce the risk of future destructive political violence.

Dansk resumé

Ekstremt politisk had og fjendtlighed, der munder ud i trusler om eller brug af vold er en del af det politiske repertoire i Europa og USA. Uanset om den konkrete begivenhed er vold til politiske protester i USA, slåskampe mellem demonstranter og repressive politistyrker i Europæiske lande, eller som religiøst motiveret vold mod civile, er massemedierne og de sociale medier påvirket af fortællinger om politisk vold. Selvom der er variation i de konkrete taktikker og den kulturelle og politiske betydning af de forskellige begivenheder, eksisterer volden som et ekstremt, men altid potentielt, handlingsalternativ i mange politiske konflikter. I denne afhandling forsøger jeg at træde et skridt tilbage fra de unikke elementer i hver begivenhed for at spørge:

Hvilke situationsbestemte faktorer og personlighedstræk forårsager støtte til og deltagelse i politisk vold blandt almindelige borgere?

Afhandlingen bygger på det behov for mere psykologisk og empirisk forskning om hvordan individer og grupper ender med at se politisk vold som et legitimt og rimeligt handlingsalternativ, andre forskere på feltet har efterspurgt. Jeg kombinerer et personligheds- og socialpsykologisk perspektiv med indsigter fra retspsykiatri i en politisk psykologisk ramme for at bygge og empirisk teste en overordnet model, der beskriver radikaliserings til politisk vold. Afhandlingen består af seks videnskabelige artikler, der anvender nye og eksisterende datasæt. Metodisk spænder afhandlingen litteraturgennemgange, spørgeskemaundersøgelser, og laboratorieeksperimenter.

Jeg konkluderer følgende. En gennemgang af den empiriske forskningslitteratur hvad angår de psykologiske mekanismer, der er indblandet i radikaliserings, peger på en afgrænset gruppe af relevante faktorer. En grundlæggende skelnen er mellem de faktorer, der påvirker individet uafhængigt af situationen (folks personligheder), og faktorer, der virker på individet gennem det miljø, han eller hun er i (situationerne). De empiriske studier starter ved denne skelnen. De tester den rolle, normale og subkliniske personlighedstræk, situationer med stor usikkerhed, mørke og farlige verdenssyn, og stærke partitilhørsforhold har. Store korrelationsstudier viser, at personlighedstrækkene åbenhed og venlighed virker som beskyttende faktorer i forhold til støtte til og intentioner om at deltage i politisk vold. Omvendt finder vi den største støtte til vold hos personer med den ”mørke triade” af lav empati, høj aggression, og villighed til at manipulere andre. I laboratorie- og spørgeskemaeksperimenter

viser jeg, hvordan det at påvirke almindelige borgere til at føle større usikkerhed og større tilhør til deres politiske gruppering øger deres intentioner om at forsvare deres gruppe med vold mod deres politiske modstandere.

Ved at kombinere disse perspektiver undersøger jeg yderligere, hvordan personligheden og situationerne gensidigt påvirker hinanden. Jeg finder støtte til at åbenhed begrænser og ekstraversion faciliterer relationen mellem usikkerhed og støtte til politisk vold. Yderligere finder jeg, at personer med høje scores på den mørke triade i særlig grad reagerer med voldelige intentioner, men også almindelig aktivisme, når jeg øger deres politiske partitilhørsforhold.

Med baggrund i disse resultater afslutter jeg afhandlingen med et fokus på de praktiske implikationer af forskningen. Jeg argumenterer for, at der er behov for et paradigmeskift i forskning og praksis i forhold til, hvordan politisk vold forhindres. Dette skifte handler om at forstå årsagerne til radikaliserings ikke som afgrænsede kategorier, der enten er til stede eller fraværende, men som brede dimensioner, vi alle til en vis grad er påvirkede af. Jeg argumenterer for, at vi skal øge samarbejdet mellem de sociale myndigheder, sundhedssystemet, og politiet, samt inkorporere forskningsmetoder i det praktiske arbejde, hvis vi ønsker at reducere risikoen for fremtidig ødelæggende politisk vold.