

CPA Gold Medal Award for Distinguished Lifetime Contributions to Canadian Psychology / Prix de la médaille d'or pour contributions remarquables à la psychologie canadienne au cours de l'ensemble de la carrière

# The Power and Perils of Passion in the Quest for Self-Growth and Optimal Functioning

## Public Significance Statement

In everyday life, it is typically assumed that passion for an activity leads to adaptive outcomes. In this article, I present over 20 years of research that shows that two types of passion exist: harmonious (where the passion is under the person's control) and obsessive (where the passion controls the person). Whereas harmonious passion typically leads to adaptive outcomes, obsessive passion is associated with much less positive and at times maladaptive outcomes. Such distinction is fundamental to better understand the role of passion and associated processes in a variety of intrapersonal, interpersonal, group, and intergroup outcomes.

ROBERT J. VALLERAND  
Laboratoire de Recherche sur le  
Comportement Social, Département de  
Psychologie, Université du Québec à Montréal



## Abstract

In this article associated with the Gold Medal Award from the Canadian Psychological Association, I present an overview of research on the concept of passion that has been conducted by my research team and I over the past 20 years. Such research subscribes to an organismic view of the human condition wherein people are seen as active agents, who strive for self-growth and optimal functioning. The dualistic model of passion (Vallerand et al., 2003) posits that passion provides the power to seek and reach self-growth, as well as perils in this quest for self-growth. We first present the dualistic model of passion and then research in a variety of contexts and activities that substantiates this claim on the duality of passion. In so doing, it is shown that not all passions are equal and that some of them (harmonious passion) foster self-growth and optimal

functioning more than others (obsessive passion). Some conclusions are offered.

**Keywords:** harmonious passion, obsessive passion, dualistic model of passion, self-growth, optimal functioning

Nothing great in the world has ever been accomplished without passion. (Georg Hegel, 1770–1831)

If you have only one passion in life ... and you pursue it to the exclusion of everything else, it becomes very dangerous. (Eric Cantona, former professional soccer player)

A look at some of the previous recipients of the Canadian Psychological Association's (CPA's) Gold Medal Award is a "Who's Who" of Canadian psychology. It is thus with great humility that I received the 2023 Gold Medal Award. It is also with gratitude that I accepted the award. My gratitude goes towards a lot of people, too numerous to mention, including colleagues at the Université du Québec à Montréal, on the CPA board when I served as president, and on my research team over the years, for allowing me to be in a position to make contributions to Canadian psychology. Foremost, I accept this award as the captain of my research team. Without the contribution of all team members, the research conducted over the past 40 years could not have been accomplished. The journey has been fun and fulfilling and has led to several rewards. One has been the many friends made along the way, both in Canada and elsewhere. Another is the professional development of a number of blossoming graduate students from my lab at Université du Québec à Montréal, the Laboratoire de Recherche sur le Comportement Social, who eventually became scientific contributors in their own right as university professors (over 25 and counting!). Yet another is the satisfaction of having contributed to the science of motivational processes and hopefully making some inroads in our understanding of human behaviour. One final source of satisfaction is to have been in a position to contribute, with many of my colleagues and former students, to the development of Canadian psychology as an international hotbed

Robert J. Vallerand  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5301-2799>

Robert J. Vallerand received funding from Grant 950-230793 from the Canada Research Chair in Motivational Processes and Optimal Functioning. The consistent support of the Social Science and Humanities Research Council and the Fonds de recherche du Québec-Société et Culture is appreciated.

The author thanks Gord Flett for invaluable feedback on the previous version of this article; Ed Deci, Rich Ryan, and Arie Kruglanski for their continuous support during his whole career; and his life partner, Bouchra, for her unconditional positive support.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Robert J. Vallerand, Laboratoire de Recherche sur le Comportement Social, Département de Psychologie, Université du Québec à Montréal, Montréal, Québec H3C 3P8, Canada. Email: [vallerand.robert\\_j@uqam.ca](mailto:vallerand.robert_j@uqam.ca)

of motivation science. Such development has been an enormous source of pride.

My research and that of my colleagues and students have spanned more than 40 years. Whereas the first 20 years focused on the study of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation culminating with the hierarchical model of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Vallerand, 1997; Vallerand & Ratelle, 2002), the last 20 years or so, have focused on the scientific study of passion. In my 2012 *Canadian Psychology* article associated with the Donald O. Hebb Award (Vallerand, 2012a), I largely focused on the first 20 years of research on intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Such research laid the foundations for the present work. In the 2012 article, I also presented some of the work on passion that we had started to conduct at the time and how it represents such a powerful spring to action that may be conducive to important life outcomes. I encourage people to go and read the 2012 article. However, for those who gain further insights into the role of passion in positive psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) and how passion may provide fuel to pursue and promote a cause, then I encourage you to read the 2008 *Canadian Psychology* article (Vallerand, 2008). The 2008 article reflects the content of my 2007 Presidential Address at the CPA conference in Ottawa. In the 2008 article, I make the case that passion is a major source of fuel allowing one to pursue a cause like promoting psychology, sometimes for a lifetime. I hasten to underscore the fact, as we will see in a later section of the present article, that such devotion can be achieved without neglecting other aspects of one's life. I hope that graduate students and early career scholars will turn a keen eye to this issue.

In light of the 2008 and 2012 articles already covering some of the early passion research, in the present article, I will focus mostly on our recent passion research, since 2012. In this article, I make the case that people have a propensity to seek self-growth and optimal functioning. Further, one of the best ways to achieve self-growth is to be passionate about a meaningful activity and to regularly engage in this activity. However, as we will see shortly, not all passions are equal; and thus, self-growth may at times be even curtailed by the very passion that one has for the activity, leading to impoverished optimal functioning.

The purpose of this article is to address the above issues. This article starts with a presentation of the passion construct and the leading theory of passion, the dualistic model of passion (Vallerand, 2015). Second, we make a case for the role of passion in self-growth. Third, we briefly review research that shows that two types of passion exist (harmonious and obsessive) and that both can differently affect self-growth and, in turn, optimal functioning. As will be seen, passion can provide either the necessary power to reach self-growth or bring about perils that may undermine such quest, depending on the type of passion at play. This distinction between the power and perils of passion is nicely illustrated in the two quotes at the beginning of this article. Such distinction refers to the duality of passion, a theme that is omnipresent in this article. Finally, the article concludes with some thoughts on the role of passion in self-growth and optimal functioning.

### On the Concept of Passion

The concept of passion has a long history but a short past. It goes back at least to the Greek philosophers. Further, people use it daily in their everyday interactions. We thus started our research on the

concept of passion more than 20 years ago expecting to find a lot of articles on the topic. However, surprisingly, there was basically no research in psychology on passion for activities. There was some research on passionate love, but very little on passion for engaging in activities. So, one of the first things we did was to turn to philosophers for guidance. Without going into full details, three different perspectives on passion took place in philosophy (see Vallerand, 2015, Chapter 2). A first perspective made popular by several philosophers, including Greek philosophers, is that passion is negative as it reflects a loss of rationality and control (e.g., Plato, 429–347 B.C.E.; Spinoza, 1632–1677). Much later, passion was to be perceived as much more positive by the Romantic philosophers and as contributing to satisfaction in life (Hegel, 1770–1831; Kierkegaard, 1813–1855). In fact, for Kierkegaard, life was not worth living without passion! Finally, the third perspective was formulated at the turn of the 20th century by French armchair psychologists, Ribot (1907) and Joussain (1928). Joussain, in particular, suggested that passion can lead to either adaptive or maladaptive outcomes, thereby highlighting the inherent duality embedded within the concept of passion. It was 50 years later that research began to empirically investigate the construct of passion. However, these studies focused on passionate love (e.g., Hatfield & Walster, 1978), overlooking a passion for an activity, which is the main contemporary meaning of passion. It is only 25 years later, at the turn of the millennium, that my research team and I (Vallerand et al., 2003) conducted the first empirical studies on passion for an activity and its adaptive and maladaptive effects, using the dualistic model of passion as a guiding framework.

### The Dualistic Model of Passion

Our theoretical framework, the dualistic model of passion (DMP; Vallerand, 2010, 2015; Vallerand & Houliort, 2019; Vallerand et al., 2003), is built upon the premise that individuals have a natural tendency towards personal growth. Such self-growth can be achieved through engagement in activities and situations allowing challenges and mastery (Vallerand, 2015). Throughout life, people engage in a variety of activities allowing them to grow. Yet, among these activities, only a few develop into a passion. According to the DMP, a passion refers to a strong inclination towards an activity (or an object, an ideology, a person) that people love, value, and hold personal significance that comes to define the person. Indeed, people invest a lot of time and energy in this activity, and it becomes a part of their identity. As the activity gets internalized in the self and identity expands, this passion for an activity can propel self-growth, thereby contributing to optimal functioning both within the activity one is passionate about and one's life in general (Vallerand, 2013, 2015).

An important contribution of the DMP is that it posits that there are two types of passion: harmonious and obsessive. As we will see below, these two types of passion allow the model to address the duality inherent in passion as underscored by philosophers. Such duality depends on the quality of the internalization in self and identity (Ryan & Deci, 2017; Vallerand, 1997). Obsessive passion (OP) results from a controlled internalization of the activity that one loves in self and identity. This means that both internal pressures (e.g., an uncontrollable urge and impulsivity to engage in the activity; Orosz et al., 2016, 2018) and external pressures (e.g., self-esteem contingencies associated with the activity; Mageau et al., 2009)

compel people to get involved in the activity that they love. Thus, people feel controlled, at least in part, by the very activity that they love. They will then engage in their favourite activity with some rigid persistence (Chichekian & Vallerand, 2022; Vallerand et al., 2023) and an ego-involvement that foster conflict between the activity and other realms of life (Lopes & Vallerand, 2020, Study 2; Vallerand et al., 2003), as well as ruminations when doing something else (Carpentier et al., 2012). Such less-than-optimal activity engagement with OP should be associated with lower levels of self-growth and, in turn, lower levels of optimal functioning. OP may even lead to maladaptive outcomes both during and after having engaged with the activity, as well as when prevented from engaging in the activity (see Vallerand, 2015; Vallerand et al., 2003).

Conversely, harmonious passion (HP) comes from an autonomous internalization (Ryan & Deci, 2017; Vallerand, 1997) of the activity in self and identity. This means that people then freely engage in the beloved activity with a sense of personal endorsement that entails an open, nondefensive, and mindful engagement in the activity (St-Louis et al., 2018; Vallerand et al., 2003). Engaging in an activity with an HP should therefore allow people to fully focus on the task at hand and to experience positive outcomes both during task engagement (e.g., positive affect, concentration, flow; Carpentier et al., 2012; Vallerand et al., 2003) and afterward (general positive affect, life satisfaction, etc.), thereby contributing to life outcomes and optimal functioning. Further, persistence in the activity is then flexible (Chichekian & Vallerand, 2022; Vallerand et al., 2023) such that people can retain a sense of control over their passionate engagement and can momentarily disengage from it if necessary. Thus, the passionate activity is in equilibrium with other realms of people's lives and other identity elements that should lead to adaptive outcomes both during and after activity engagement.

### On Passion and Self-Growth

As mentioned previously, the DMP posits that people have a natural tendency towards self-growth. That is, people seek to master both their outside and inside worlds (e.g., Maslow, 1954; Rogers, 1963; Ryan & Deci, 2017). In so doing, we grow and develop psychologically and reach high levels of optimal functioning. It is posited that one of the key variables that contributes to self-growth is engaging in activities that reflect our identity (Waterman, 1993) and especially those that we are passionate about (Vallerand, 2013, 2015). The DMP posits that those activities that people are passionate about have a better potential for self-growth than other activities. There are at least three reasons why this is so (see Vallerand, 2015, Chapter 3, for a more detailed discussion). The first reason why passion can maximize self-growth is that it fosters mastery goals (Elliot & Church, 1997). Mastery goals entail focusing on improving and mastering the various aspects of the activity itself. Much research reveals that mastery goals do foster a variety of adaptive outcomes (see Elliot & Church, 1997, for a review), including sustained engagement in deliberate practice that is known to foster improvement and high performance on the activity (see Bonneville-Roussy et al., 2011; Vallerand et al., 2007; Vallerand, Mageau, et al., 2008). Over time, with passion, people come to know just about everything there is to know about the activity; they become experts at their activity, thereby allowing them to psychologically grow at least within the realm of the activity. Thus, research reveals that both HP and OP (HP more so than OP)

contribute to mastery goals and therefore indirectly lead to self-growth and development.

The second reason why passion fosters self-growth is that passion is a very powerful motivational force that is conducive to fully engaging in the activity with high levels of energy and sustained enthusiasm. This is true for both HP and OP. Clearly, one does not have to force people to do the activity that they are passionate about. Sometimes, it may be the opposite as we wished we could restrain people from engaging in their activity as they sometimes overdo it, especially as pertains to OP. Thus, when passionate about an activity, people engage in their beloved activity with full energy, persistence, and regularity, for several hours weekly (on average 8 hr per week for nonwork passionate activities; Vallerand et al., 2003, Study 1). With such high-quality engagement, self-growth within the purview of the activity is likely to take place.

The third and final reason why passion is conducive to the highest levels of self-growth is that one's passion can facilitate the experience of a number of recurrent positive experiences and processes during activity engagement. These, in turn, can foster adaptive outcomes (and self-growth) within the sphere of the activity, as well as outside of it in one's life in general. While this is mostly the case for HP, OP has also been found to facilitate some adaptive outcomes to a lesser degree (Vallerand, 2015; Vallerand & Houlfort, 2019). Some of these adaptive processes include flow and positive emotions. Flow and emotions are important because they are hypothesized to serve several adaptive functions. For instance, Fredrickson's (2001) broaden and build theory posits that positive emotions serve to broaden people's scope of attention and show an expanded use of information and strategies at their disposal that, in turn, leads to a more permanent building of physical and psychological skills. These can be made available in the future when needed and can contribute to further self-growth. Similarly, Csikszentmihalyi (1990) has proposed that flow can lead people to work hard so as to improve and face challenges in the passionate activity and experience flow again. During this process, self-growth consistently increases. In sum, passion should foster a high degree of self-growth and HP to a greater degree than OP. Research on these issues appears below.

### A Word on the Passion Scale

The first order of business when proposing a new construct, such as passion, is to develop and validate a scale to assess it. That is what we did in the original Vallerand et al. (2003) passion article. In line with the DMP, this scale is specific to an activity and does not reflect a trait. One is not expected to be passionate for anything or everything. Through exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses, two subscales reflecting HP and OP were developed with appropriate reliability and validity in the Vallerand et al. (2003) series of studies. Additional results from over 20 studies worldwide provide strong support for its bifactorial structure in over 12 languages and as pertains to hundreds of different activities (see Vallerand & Rahimi, 2022). Further, in a study with over 3,500 participants, Marsh et al. (2013) have shown that the scale is invariant (or equivalent) both in English and French, for both men and women, across various age groups, and for a number of different activities. Finally, other results revealed that both HP and OP were positively associated with the passion criteria (i.e., loving the activity, finding it important, spending time and energy on it, perceiving it as a "passion," and seeing it as part of one's identity), while showing distinct relationships with various

other constructs, thereby providing support for the convergent and divergent validity of both subscales (see Vallerand et al., 2003, Study 1; Marsh et al., 2013). The Passion Scale consists of two subscales of six items each reflecting Obsessive Passion (e.g., “I almost have an obsessive feeling towards this activity”) and Harmonious Passion (e.g., “This activity is in harmony with other activities in my life”). The 12 items are presented after instructions asking them to reflect on an activity that they love, is important to them, and in which they spend regular time on (three key passion criteria). We do not use the word “passion” in the instructions to prevent a subjective selection of an activity that would reflect either HP or OP. It is this scale that has been used in most studies in the field of passion. The scale is presented in Appendix.

Interestingly, 84% of the participants in the Vallerand et al. (2003, Study 1) research indicated that they had at least a moderate level of passion towards an activity in their lives. So, most people are passionate for a given activity in their lives. Passionate activities reported in the Vallerand et al. (2003) Study 1, ranged from physical activity and sports and music to watching movies and reading. Participants reported engaging in their passionate activity for an average of 8.5 hr per week and had been engaging in that activity for several years. Further, passionate activities are meaningful to people and do not simply reflect a fleeting interest. These overall findings have been obtained in several studies around the world (see Vallerand, 2015; Vallerand & Rahimi, 2022), making passion highly relevant for people in general.

### Passion and Self-Growth Within the Purview of the Activity

The original 2003 article (Vallerand et al., 2003) opened up the field of research on passion. Since then, thousands of studies have been conducted on the role of passion in a variety of outcomes. Such research has been conducted in both our lab and that of others around the world using the DMP as a guiding theory (see Curran et al., 2015; Vallerand, 2010, 2015; Vallerand & Houliort, 2019, for reviews). Such research has been typically conducted in various field settings with a variety of real-life participants, such as athletes, musicians, actors, dancers, painters, teachers, nurses, administrators, video gamers, and others of various ages across the lifespan. In most studies, participants are asked to complete the Passion Scale with respect to their favourite activity (e.g., basketball) and scales assessing various outcomes experienced both while engaging in the passionate activity (e.g., flow, positive affect, performance, creativity) and in one’s life in general (e.g., relationships outside the activity, well-being, health, contributions to society). Other research has also manipulated passion, inducing HP or OP and observing the outcomes (e.g., Bélanger et al., 2013a; Lafrenière et al., 2012). Such research has looked at a variety of outcomes highly relevant for self-growth.

As mentioned previously, the position of the DMP is that HP leads to sustained engagement in the activity, leading to self-growth and development both within the area of one’s passion and in the rest of the person’s life. Such self-growth is then conducive to several adaptive outcomes, reflecting optimal functioning. Conversely, the effects of OP are much less adaptive because it entails outcomes and processes of lower levels of autonomy and psychological quality than HP. Although some self-growth may take place with OP, it should be limited to the area of one’s passionate activity and of lower quality than with HP.

### Passion and Affective Outcomes

Much research has focused on affective outcomes such as positive and negative affect and task satisfaction when engaging in the activity. Such research reveals that HP leads to positive emotions when engaging in the activity, whereas OP is either unrelated to positive affect or is positively related to it but less so than HP. Conversely, OP is positively related to negative affect, and HP is either negatively related or unrelated to it (see Curran et al., 2015, for a meta-analysis of such effects). For instance, in a study with basketball players, Vallerand et al. (2006, Study 2) showed that HP positively predicted positive, but negatively predicted negative, affect during a game. OP was slightly and positively related to positive affect but more strongly related to negative affect. These findings have been replicated in a number of studies conducted in a variety of other settings, such as work, school, and leisure (e.g., Chichekian et al., 2023; Philippe et al., 2010; Rahimi & Vallerand, 2021; B. J. I. Schellenberg et al., 2020; Sverdlik et al., 2021). Further, OP is also strongly associated with negative affect both *during* and *after* task engagement, as well as when prevented from engaging in the activity one is passionate about (Vallerand et al., 2003). Such is not the case with HP (see B. J. I. Schellenberg et al. 2021; B. J. I. Schellenberg et al. 2020; Vallerand et al., 2003). Research has also looked at the role of HP and OP in task satisfaction and obtained similar results as with positive affect (e.g., Bélanger & Ratelle, 2021; Vallerand et al., 2006). Finally, research in sports has revealed that OP creates an amplification effect such that both positive and negative emotions are amplified following sports success and failure, respectively (Verner-Filion et al., 2018).

### Passion and Cognitive Outcomes

Research on passion and outcomes has looked at the role of passion for a specific activity on a variety of outcomes experienced within the activity. Research looking at cognitive outcomes while engaging in an activity one is passionate about reveals that HP leads to positive cognitions, such as attention, concentration, task absorption, and flow during task engagement. For instance, in the original Vallerand et al. (2003, Study 1) research, HP was positively associated with being more concentrated and as experiencing more flow during task engagement. Similarly, much research reveals that HP (but not OP) leads to experiencing higher levels of flow in a variety of contexts that include sports (e.g., Philippe et al., 2009), work (Lavigne et al., 2012), and education (Carpentier et al., 2012). Research also reveals that OP is either negatively related or unrelated to positive forms of cognitions, such as concentration (see Curran et al., 2015).

Furthermore, it should be noted that not only does OP typically yield less adaptive cognitions than HP but it can also lead to some maladaptive ones as well. For instance, research reveals that OP positively predicts ruminations about the passionate activity when engaging in some *other* activity (e.g., Carpentier et al., 2012; Vallerand et al., 2003, Study 1; Vallerand et al., 2010, Studies 1 and 2) and cognitive conflict between the passionate activity and other goals in the person’s life (e.g., Bélanger et al., 2013a), including work–family conflict as shown by the research of Nicolas Gillet, now a professor at the Université de Tours in France (Gillet et al., 2023; see also Vallerand et al., 2010). Conversely, HP for work leads to work–family enrichment (e.g., Gillet et al., 2023).

### ***Passion and Relationships***

Research has also assessed the link between passion and friendships within the activity. Passionate people are often perceived as charismatic and should therefore be expected to make more friends within the purview of the activity. Research reveals that this popular belief is only true for HP (e.g., [Philippe et al., 2010](#)). For instance, in a short longitudinal study, [Philippe et al. \(2010, Study 3\)](#) showed that over the course of a 1-week basketball camp, HP for basketball predicted developing new friendships with some of the other basketball players over the course of the week. Such was not the case for OP. Similar findings have been obtained with respect to better relationships at work and at school with students over a complete semester ([Philippe et al., 2010, Studies 1 and 4, respectively](#)), as well as between coaches and players, including some Olympic coaches and athletes ([Jowett et al., 2013](#); [M.-A. Lafrenière et al., 2008](#)).

The work of Noémie Carboneau and Catherine Ratelle, now professors at the Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières and Université Laval, respectively, has taken passion into the field of romantic relationships. They have shown that individuals with an HP for the loved one experience a more fulfilling relationship with their romantic partner, whereas OP is either unrelated or negatively related to it ([Carboneau et al., 2016](#); [Ratelle et al., 2013](#); [Vallerand & Carboneau, 2016](#)). Of additional interest, the passion of our partner also affects the quality of our relationship in the same way as our own passion ([Ratelle et al., 2013](#))! Research also reveals that having an OP leads to bleak intimate relationships. Indeed, OP for the romantic relationship has been found to lead to a less satisfying relationship, conflict with the romantic partner ([Carboneau & Vallerand, 2013](#); [Vallerand, Mageau, et al., 2008, Study 3](#)), and to more breakups. Further, these effects can be predicted years in advance on the basis of one's types of passion ([Ratelle et al., 2013](#)). Jocelyn Bélanger, now a professor at Carnegie-Mellon University in Qatar, has even shown that OP leads one to stalk a former lover ([Bélanger et al., 2021](#)).

Research initiated by Frédéric Philippe, now a professor at the Université du Québec à Montréal, has taken passion into the realm of sexuality. Studies on sexual passion have demonstrated that a harmonious sexual passion leads to a more satisfying sexuality with the loved one and a better romantic relationship overall, even controlling statistically for the level of romantic passion ([Philippe et al., 2017](#)). Specifically, a harmonious sexual passion is positively related to relationship quality ([Philippe et al., 2017, Studies 2 and 3](#); [Philippe et al., 2019, Study 1](#)), couple adjustment ([Philippe et al., 2019, Studies 2 and 3](#)), and sexual satisfaction ([Philippe et al., 2017, Study 1](#); [Philippe et al., 2019, Studies 1 and 3](#)). Conversely, an obsessive sexual passion leads to intrusive sexual thoughts ([Philippe et al., 2017, Study 1](#)); increased attentiveness to alternative partners, sex conflicts, and violent intentions towards the loved one when under threat ([Philippe et al., 2017, Study 2](#); [Philippe et al., 2019, Study 1](#)); future intentions of extradyadic sex ([Guilbault et al., 2020, Studies 1 and 2, and 3](#)); as well as greater likelihood of breaking up over time ([Philippe et al., 2017, Study 3](#)).

### ***Behavioural Consequences***

Passion has also been found to predict a variety of behavioural consequences related to activity engagement. For instance, both HP and OP have been typically found to positively predict sustained engagement in the passionate activity, such as exercise (e.g.,

[Parastatidou et al., 2014](#)), and highly demanding task activities, such as deliberate practice ([Ericsson, 2006](#)), aimed at improving on the activity (e.g., [Vallerand et al., 2007](#); [Vallerand, Mageau, et al., 2008](#)). It is through such regular engagement in deliberate practice activities that long-term improvement (and self-growth) in objective performance takes place in music ([Bonneville-Roussy et al., 2011](#)), the arts ([Vallerand et al., 2007, Study 1](#)), education ([Vallerand et al., 2007, Study 2](#)), and sports ([Vallerand, Mageau, et al., 2008, Studies 1 and 2](#)). Although the long-term performance effects of the two types of passion are relatively similar, the process would appear to be quite different. Specifically, because HP also facilitates the experience of more adaptive on-task cognitive and affective (and life) outcomes, the harmonious road to excellence would appear to be much more adaptive than the obsessive road. Indeed, as our research with Jérémie Verner-Filion, now a professor at the Université du Québec en Outaouais, shows, OP leads one on a path to performance that may include emotional suffering, insecurity, and fear of failure along the way ([Verner-Filion & Vallerand, 2018](#); [Verner-Filion et al., 2017](#); see also [Bélanger et al., 2013b](#)), whereas with HP happiness can coincide with high performance. Thus, processes involved with HP and OP differ, and while OP may at times lead to adaptive outcomes, typically, the outcomes are more adaptive for HP. We return to this issue in a later section.

Finally, OP leads to behavioural addiction towards a variety of activities, such as exercise ([Szabo & Kovacsik, 2019](#)), gaming ([Lafrenière et al., 2009](#)), drinking and smoking marijuana ([Steers et al., 2015](#)), and gambling ([Holding et al., 2021](#); [Philippe & Vallerand, 2007](#)). Harmonious passion does not! Research by Daniel Lalonde, now a professor at the Université du Québec à Chicoutimi, reveals that addiction develops because with OP people find some satisfaction in the activity that compensates for what is missing in their life ([Lalonde et al., 2017](#)). Thus, OP represents a compensatory type of motivational process (see [Holding et al., 2021](#)). In addition, OP has also been found to predict extremism (see [Kruglanski et al., 2021](#)) and at times violence. Of particular relevance is our research with Anne-Sophie Gousse-Lessard, now a professor at the Université du Québec à Montréal, that has shown that OP for the environmental cause leads to violence against those who do not respect the environment, whereas HP leads to more acceptable behaviour such as the peaceful promotion of ideas ([Gousse-Lessard et al., 2013](#)). These findings have been replicated with respect to politics ([Rip et al., 2012, Study 1](#)), religious involvement ([Rip et al., 2012, Study 2](#)), and sport ([Donahue et al., 2009](#); [Vallerand, Ntoumanis, et al., 2008](#)).

The research reviewed so far has made a rather compelling case that HP typically leads to more adaptive outcomes (and thus, optimal functioning) than OP within the realm of the activity one is passionate about. However, such research does not directly make the case that one's passionate engagement in the activity is fuelled by one's desire to grow, which in turn leads to outcomes. A key process related to this issue is the type of goals that people seek while engaging in the passionate activity. Because the DMP posits that people seek self-growth, then one key type of goal should be mastery goals ([Elliot & Church, 1997](#)). With this type of goal, individuals seek to master the activity and thus to grow and improve at the activity. In contrast, other types of goals, such as performance-approach goals (seeking to be better than others) and performance-avoidance goals (seeking not to do worse than others), have little to do with mastery and growth on the activity as one can do better (or not worse) than others without actually improving in the activity. The DMP posits that HP and

OP should lead to pursuing different types of goals while engaging in the activity one is passionate about. Specifically, HP which is characterized by having access to adaptive self-processes (St-Louis et al., 2018) should lead mostly to mastery goals. Conversely, because it mostly entails an ego-involved process, OP should lead to all three types of goals, including the maladaptive goal of trying to avoid failure. Furthermore, once activated, these goals lead to different effects (Elliot & Church, 1997). Mastery goals lead to the most adaptive effects both within the activity and in the rest of the person's life, whereas performance-avoidance goals lead to the worst effects. Performance-approach goals have been found to lead to some limited positive activity effects (especially performance) but not so with out-of-activity outcomes in the rest of the person's life.

The results of several studies provide support for the above hypotheses on two counts (e.g., Bonneville-Roussy et al., 2011; St-Cyr et al., 2021, 2023; Vallerand et al., 2007, Studies 1 and 2; Vallerand, Mageau, et al., 2008, Studies 1 and 2). First, HP typically leads only to the mastery goals, thereby indicating a clear self-growth orientation. In contrast, OP typically triggers all three types of goals, with the performance-avoidance goals being the most predominant. This pattern of results supports a less-than-optimal orientation towards self-growth with OP. Second, the three achievement goals lead to the expected effects on outcomes, with mastery goals leading to the most adaptive effects both within the activity and in the person's life, whereas performance-avoidance goals lead to the most maladaptive ones.

One recent study provides strong support for the above rationale. In this study, with doctoral student Jany St-Cyr and other colleagues (St-Cyr et al., 2023), we had basketball players complete the Passion Scale for basketball and a scale assessing their goals when playing basketball. This latter scale (Elliot & Church, 1997) assesses mastery goals, as well as performance-approach and performance-avoidance goals. In addition, we had athletes complete a task in which they had to make decisions during different basketball situations. We focused on one key situation: when one's own personal performance is in conflict with the team's performance. For instance, if during a basketball game, I have the choice between taking a shot to improve my own scoring or making a pass to an open teammate to ensure a team win, which option do I select? Because mastery goals entail a self-growth perspective, it is this type of goal that should lead to selecting and making a decision favouring one's team because that is what good (team) basketball players do. Conversely, the other two types of goals should foster a selfish decision. Further, in line with the above, it was hypothesized that HP mostly predicts the more adaptive mastery goals, whereas OP should predict all three types of goals, but mostly performance-approach and performance-avoidance goals. The results were fully supportive. In line with predictions from the DMP, HP fostered mastery goals to a greater extent than OP. In turn, seeking mastery goals as a basketball (team) player led one to make decisions favouring the team and in the end helped the players becoming more complete as a team athlete. In contrast, whereas OP was also associated with mastery goals, it nevertheless fostered performance-approach and performance-avoidance goals to a greater extent, thereby leading the athletes to make decisions that were more selfish in nature and thus stalling self-growth as a basketball player.

In sum, research on outcomes and processes that are experienced during task engagement reveals that HP leads to positive advantages relative to OP, except as pertains to performance where both have

a positive impact. In the previous section, I only presented some of the available findings. The reader is referred to other published sources for a more complete review of the literature in different fields, such as work (Vallerand & Houliort, 2019), sports (Vallerand & Verner-Filion, 2020), and education (Vallerand, Chichekian, & Schellenberg, 2024).

## Passion and Self-Growth in the Person's Life

We have seen in the previous section that self-growth at the activity level depends on the type of passion at play. HP for a specific activity was consistently found to foster such self-growth much more than OP within the purview of the activity. The DMP posits that the same situation should also take place with respect to self-growth *outside* the passionate activity. This is because some of the adaptive outcomes and processes experienced *within* the activity should also contribute to the presence of additional positive outcomes *outside* the realm of the passionate activity in the rest of the person's life. Below, I briefly review some research that supports this claim both at the intrapersonal and interpersonal levels.

### Intrapersonal Outcomes

Research reveals that HP for one's favourite activity (e.g., playing basketball) positively contributes to experiencing flow in a second activity such as studying a school subject (Carpentier et al., 2012), which in turn fosters *psychological well-being*. Such is not the case with OP because it leads to ruminations about the passionate activity, which prevents flow from being experienced when studying, and undermines well-being! Research with Jocelyn Bélanger even showed that the negative effects of OP for an activity on a second activity can take place at the *unconscious* level (Bélanger et al., 2013a). In this series of studies, we have shown that leading participants to unconsciously think about a passionate activity (through a priming word presented at 17 ms) when engaging in a second nonpassionate activity leads to conflict with the activity that one is currently doing, thereby preventing smooth performance on this other activity. In the long run, self-growth in these other activities will be curtailed by the conflict induced by OP about the passionate activity. However, it should be underscored that this "goal-shielding" effect (Shah et al., 2002) only takes place with OP. With HP, no conflict takes place and the person can think about the passionate activity and still be efficient on the second activity! In other words, with HP, one can be passionate about a given activity and still experience self-growth in another activity, elsewhere in our life.

We have seen in the previous section that HP leads to experiencing more positive, and OP to more negative, affect during task engagement. Of interest is a diary study (Mageau & Vallerand, 2007) conducted with Geneviève Mageau, now a professor at the Université de Montréal, that revealed that over a 2-week period, each day that one engaged in the passionate activity, HP led to an increase of positive affect (over baseline levels) experienced at the end of the day, several hours after task engagement. However, with OP, failing to engage in the passionate activity led to *decreases* in positive affect over baseline days. These findings were basically replicated in a 2-week diary study with women passionate about physical exercise by Michelle Fortier, now a professor at the University of Ottawa and her research team (Guérin et al., 2013). Thus, passion can trigger an affect that can be long lasting, even

several hours after engagement in the passionate activity, thereby affecting one's general life outside the activity.

If engaging in a passionate activity out of HP fosters the experience of positive affect outside the passionate activity, and if positive affect fosters psychological well-being (Vallerand, 2012b), then HP for a given activity should facilitate *psychological well-being*. Several studies provide support for this hypothesis (e.g., Philippe et al., 2009; Rousseau & Vallerand, 2003, 2008). For instance, having HP for exercise leads to the experience of positive affect during exercise that, in turn, leads to increases in psychological well-being over a 2-month period (Rousseau & Vallerand, 2008). Philippe et al. (2009) even showed that such increases in well-being take place over a 1-year period! No such benefits take place with OP; in fact, there was a slight decrease in well-being over time. Furthermore, people who did not have a passion in their life also experienced a decrease in well-being over the 1-year period! Of major interest, longitudinal research by Nathalie Houffort, now a professor at the Université du Québec à Montréal, reveals that OP for work can predict several years down the road being unable to psychologically adjust following retirement, whereas HP for work protects from such psychological problems and leads to a highly fulfilling state of retirement (Houffort et al., 2015). Other research also reveals that OP is associated with various forms of psychological *ill-being* such as generalized anxiety and depression (e.g., Curran et al., 2015; Rousseau & Vallerand, 2003; Vallerand, 2015) and even burnout (Fernet et al., 2014; Trépanier et al., 2014; Vallerand et al., 2010).

Research has also shown that passion plays an important role in *health*. For instance, studies have revealed that both HP and OP provide a high level of energy *during* task engagement such as video gaming (Lafrenière et al., 2009). However, only HP allows one to maintain high energy *following* task engagement, thereby contributing to one's life outside the activity. In addition, passion (both HP and OP) directed towards engagement in sports and exercise helps the individual to sustain engagement in physical activity on a regular basis and thus help them to stay in shape and better health (Parastatidou et al., 2012, 2014). However, with OP, commitment is often excessive and linked to exercise addiction, which can lead to risky behaviours (Vallerand et al., 2003, Study 3) and injuries (Rip et al., 2006; see also De Jonge et al., 2020). This is not the case with HP, as it promotes a more moderate and flexible investment in the activity, thereby facilitating optimal functioning. An interesting study conducted with regular yoga exercisers makes that point (Carbonneau et al., 2010). Yoga is well recognized as an activity that promotes health. However, the results of two studies showed that only HP led to some of the expected positive outcomes while engaging in yoga and the buffering of negative physical symptoms in one's life. OP was not associated with such benefits and even fostered increases in negative emotions over time while doing yoga! Thus, it is not so much what you do, as with yoga, but how you do it, with HP leading to more adaptive health effects than OP (see also B. J. I. Schellenberg et al., 2021, for similar results in a study with breast cancer survivors).

In the introductory section, I mentioned the issue of passion for a cause. In one series of studies (St-Louis et al., 2016), we looked at the passion for a cause (humanitarian help) of health workers and how it affected their own health. It is well known that some volunteers return from a mission with several health problems (Putman et al., 2009). Study 3, in particular, was very telling in this regard. In this study, we tested health workers both before and after going abroad on a mission for an average period of 2 months. We

assessed both their passion for the cause of humanitarian help and various indices of health. We were then in a position to conduct cross-lagged panel analyses to look at health changes. Results revealed that 90% of health workers were passionate for their cause. So, passion matters as pertains to the cause one is promoting. More importantly, workers, who had an HP for the cause, returned with a *better* health than when they left! They also felt that their mission was a great success. In contrast, with OP, workers returned with a *poorer* health. For instance, OP led to increases in negative health symptoms such as persistent headaches, stomach pain, and so forth. These negative effects were mediated by self-neglect. In other words, humanitarian helpers with OP feel that the cause is more important than their own health, engage in self-neglect (e.g., "neglecting their sleep for the sake of the mission"), and came back suffering. In sum, passion for a cause matters greatly not simply for reaching the cause that one is promoting but also to remain healthy in the process. And if one is suffering, it becomes almost impossible to help others. Additional research in this area is clearly necessary.

Other research has focused on the cardiovascular health. Specifically, in one study, we (Vallerand et al., 2022) had university students engage in a demanding educational task while monitoring their cardiovascular reactivity (Blascovich et al., 2004). The results revealed that HP was positively related to adaptive cardiovascular reactivity during task engagement, as well as vitality, whereas OP was unrelated to such adaptation, negatively related to vitality but positively related to negative emotions. The above research took place only in a 1-hr session. However, one may ask what happens to one's health if the stress lasts for weeks or even for months? In the already mentioned St-Louis et al.'s (2016, Study 3) research on passion for a cause and health, we looked at the PTSD of passionate humanitarian workers returning from an intense 2-month mission abroad. It was found that those who had an OP for providing humanitarian help came back with PTSD because they tend to ruminate about the experiences that they go through. This was not the case for helpers with HP who, in fact, reported coming back in better health than when they left! In short, regardless of the type of activity engaged in, PH leads to beneficial effects for one's health, whereas this is not necessarily the case with OP.

One series of studies on the role of passion in self-growth that we have done dealt with the role of romantic passion in one's development as a person *outside* of the relationship (Carbonneau et al., 2016). Specifically, we wished to see if romantic passion for the loved one would allow one to grow as a person or if rather, passion would curtail one's personal development. In a series of three studies, participants completed the passion scale, various questions about the romantic relationship (e.g., length), and a scale assessing personal growth (e.g., "Being in a relationship with my partner has helped me develop qualities that were hidden in me") and disengagement from other relationships and activities (e.g., "Being in a relationship with my partner has made me stop doing activities that I used to really enjoy"; "Being in a relationship with my partner has made me neglect my relationships with my family"). We hypothesized that HP for the romantic relationship would foster personal growth and prevent disengaging from other activities and relationships, whereas a much less positive pattern of results was expected for OP. These hypotheses were corroborated in all three studies. For example, in Study 3, participants completed the Passion Scale and asked their best friend to complete the personal growth and disengagement scales for them. The results of a path analysis

appear in Figure 1. As can be seen, once more, HP for the romantic relationship nurtured self-growth as a person and protected the person from neglecting other aspects of their life. Conversely, OP only positively predicted *neglecting* other relationships and activities. These findings were obtained while controlling for relationship length and with informants who provided the dependent variables. Overall, it is clear that HP for a romantic relationship allows one to grow as a person, whereas OP does not, or at least not as much. If one takes into consideration the fact that romantic HP also fosters a more satisfied relationship than OP (e.g., Ratelle et al., 2013), it follows that full self-growth (both inside and outside the passionate activity) is achieved with HP, but not with OP.

### Interpersonal Consequences

The research above focused on intrapersonal outcomes outside the passionate activity. Research has also shown that passion for an activity can also have important effects on *interpersonal* outcomes outside the passionate activity. For instance, research reveals that having an HP for the internet and Facebook promotes friendships *outside* the passionate activity, whereas OP does not (Utz et al., 2012). Research with Luc Pelletier and Céline Blanchard, both now professors at the University of Ottawa and other colleagues (Séguin-Lévesque et al., 2003), showed that having an OP for the internet leads to conflict with our romantic partner. These findings were replicated and extended in a study with soccer fans conducted in U.K. stadiums (Vallerand, Mageau, et al., 2008, Study 3). It was found OP for being a soccer fan leads to conflict between soccer and the romantic relationship that, in turn, undermines the quality of the relationship. No such adverse effects took place for those U.K. soccer fans who had an HP for soccer (see Figure 2).

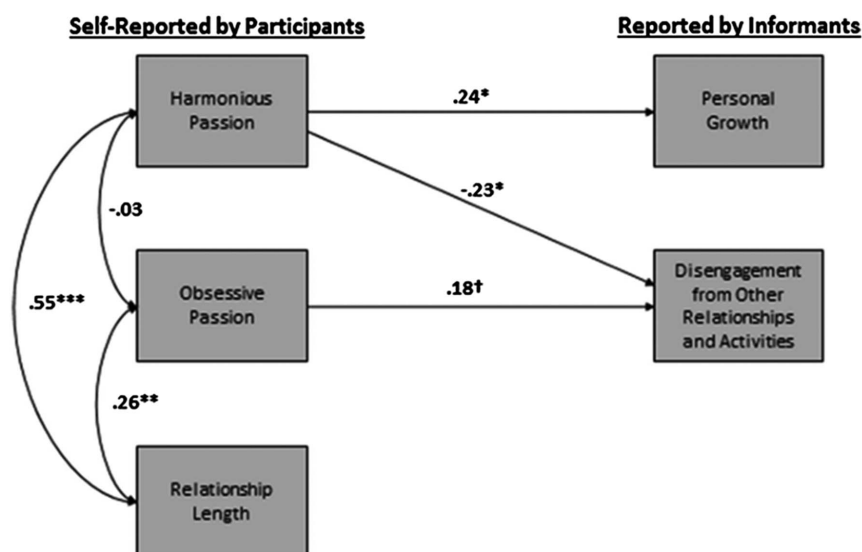
In a related study (Rapaport et al., 2018), we attempted to provide an answer to the following question: “Does engaging in an activity together (like double tennis) help a romantic relationship flourish?” Couples completed scales assessing their passion for their romantic relationship, as well as their passion for a second activity that they engaged in together with the loved one. Research revealed that, controlling for romantic passion, HP for the joint activity (like double tennis) led to positive emotions during activity engagement that led to a better romantic relationship. However, an OP for the joint activity led to *negative* emotions that undermined the relationship. Thus, engaging in a joint activity like double tennis will lead to benefits outside the activity (in this case having a better romantic relationship) *only* to the extent that it is fuelled by HP.

We have also looked at the role of passion in intergroup behaviour. Research reveals that OP leads to verbally provoking members of other groups (Vallerand, Mageau, et al., 2008, Study 2) and being ready to physically hurt other people (Donahue et al., 2009; Rip et al., 2012; Vallerand, Mageau, et al., 2008, Study 2) who do not share our beliefs or worse, who dare provoke us. Such is not the case with HP where a more positive behaviour is displayed towards members of other groups. Once more, processes experienced while engaging in the passionate activity have been identified as a mediator of the effects of passion. For instance, experiencing negative emotions such as hatred towards others who attack one’s faith mediates the impact of OP on intended violent behaviour towards these other individuals (Rip et al., 2012, Study 2).

### Focusing on Self-Growth in Both the Activity and Life

The research presented in the above sections reveals that with OP, people seem to lose twice: Adaptive outcomes within the activity are

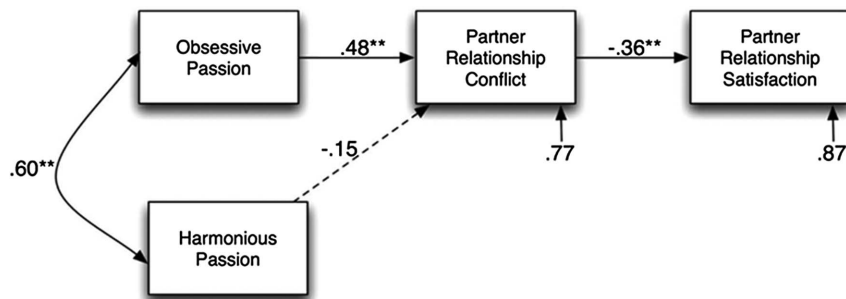
**Figure 1**  
*The Role of Romantic Passion in Personal Growth*



*Note.*  $n = 99$ . Standardized path coefficients are presented. From “I’m Not the Same Person Since I Met You”: The Role of Romantic Passion in How People Change When They Get Involved in a Romantic Relationship,” by N. Carboneau, R. J. Vallerand, G. L. Lavigne, and Y. Paquet, 2016, *Motivation and Emotion*, 40(1), 101–117 (<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11031-015-9512-z>). Copyright 2016 by Springer Nature. Reprinted with permission.

†  $p < .10$ . \*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

**Figure 2**  
*The Role of Passion and Football Relationship Conflict in Quality of Relationship*



*Note.* Results of the path analysis in Study 3. The dashed line indicates a nonsignificant path. From "On Passion and Sports Fans: A Look at Football," by R. J. Vallerand, N. Ntoumanis, F. L. Philippe, G. L. Lavigne, N. Carbonneau, A. Bonneville, C. Lagacé-Labonté, and G. Maliha, 2008, *Journal of Sports Sciences*, 26(12), 1279–1293 (<https://doi.org/10.1080/02640410802123185>). Copyright 2008 by Taylor & Francis. Reprinted with permission.  
 \*\*  $p < .01$ .

limited at best, and so it is also outside the activity, in other areas of the person's life. Thus, with OP, self-growth and development are not optimal but rather limited in scope both within the activity and in one's life. However, with HP, a recurrent series of micromoments of self-growth take place where a positive moment experienced while engaging in the passionate activity contributes to the next moment outside of it, and so forth, leading to global self-growth. Passion does matter! So, therein lie the power and perils of passion. HP has the power to foster full self-growth, whereas OP brings with it the perils of less than complete self-growth in the activity and potentially the development of an incomplete self overall.

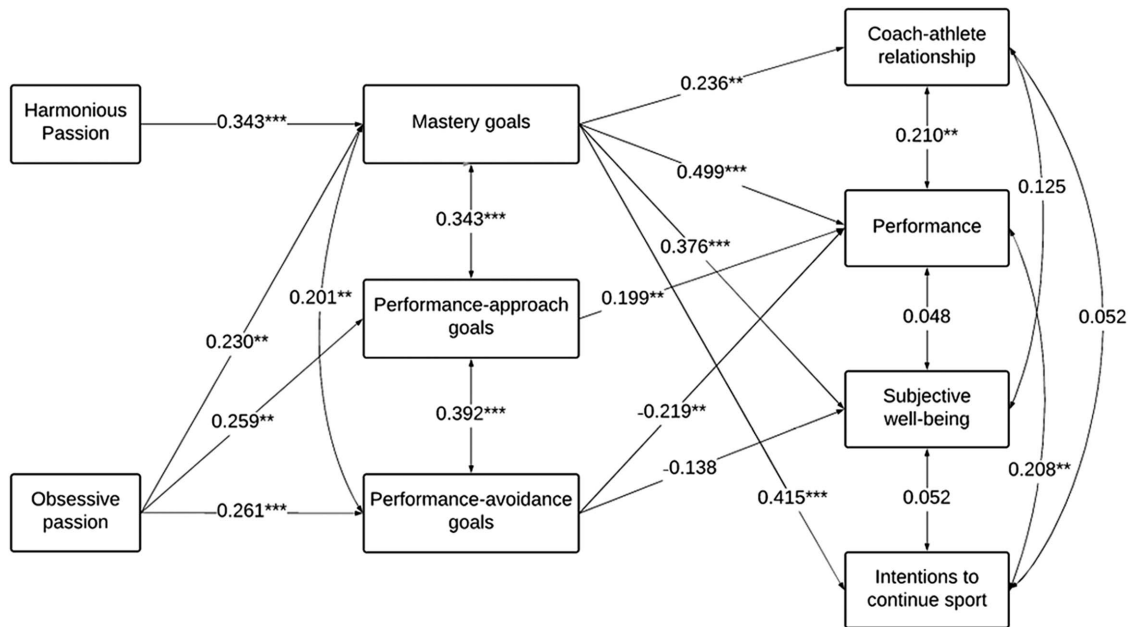
It should be noted that in the research reviewed so far, the activity and life outcomes were rarely assessed in the same study. Thus, it is difficult to determine if passion affects self-growth in both the activity and outside of it in the rest of life for the same participants. More recently, with Léandre Chénard-Poirier, now a professor at Hautes-Études Commerciales in Montréal, and other colleagues (Chénard-Poirier et al., 2023), we have developed a scale to assess optimal functioning in society that includes both activity and life outcomes and have started to use it in passion research. Based on Vallerand (2013), we posit that optimal functioning is multidimensional in nature and refers to high levels of psychological, physical (health), and relational well-being; high performance in the main sphere of endeavour; and contributing to society. Thus, this perspective proposes that to be optimally functioning, one needs to be thriving at work or school (for students) by displaying high performance at work (or school) and to be happy, healthy, and well-connected with others, while contributing to other people's welfare.

In a series of studies, we have shown that the optimal functioning in society scale is valid and reliable with both students and workers and displays invariance across occupations, age, gender, and relationship status. Thus, this scale allows us to look at the dimensions of both the activity and life in general. Of greater interest for the present discussion, we have started to use this scale in recent studies with passion (e.g., Bouizegarene et al., 2018; Chénard-Poirier et al., 2023; St-Cyr et al., 2021). Overall, what this research reveals is that HP leads to positive outcomes with most of the dimensions, whereas the contribution of OP is much more limited, with positive effects

taking place mostly with performance and some negative relationships with mostly physical health and relationships.

We have started to conduct research to identify the processes responsible for such diametrically different outcomes. The first process is mastery goals. We have previously seen that mastery goals mediate the effects of passion in decision making (St-Cyr et al., 2023). Specifically, HP predicted mastery goals that in turn led to more adaptive decision making in sports. In contrast, OP predicted the adoption of mastery and performance-approach and performance-avoidance goals that led to making the wrong decision in basketball. We attempted to replicate these findings in another study (St-Cyr et al., 2021), in which we tested whether mastery goals predicted optimal functioning both *within* and *outside* the activity, in the rest of the person's life. In that study, around 200 athletes completed the Passion Scale, the achievement goal scale, and a questionnaire assessing some of the elements of optimal functioning in sports. As can be seen in Figure 3, HP for sports positively predicted only mastery goals, whereas OP positively predicted all three goals. In turn, mastery goals positively predicted both activity (performance, coach–athlete relationship, and intentions to persist in their sports) and life outcomes (subjective well-being). Conversely, performance-avoidance goals had only two effects, both negative on sports performance and well-being, whereas performance-approach goals had only one effect, a positive relationship with performance. In sum, HP leads one to solely focus on self-growth-oriented (mastery) goals in the activity that, in turn, leads to optimal functioning both within and outside the activity. The picture is different with OP, where a focus on performance-avoidance goals, for instance, counteracts the adaptive effects of mastery goals on optimal functioning. We are currently expanding this line of research with new scales assessing self-growth both within and outside the passionate activity (Vallerand, Paquette, et al., 2024).

Another mediating process of the effects of passion in outcomes inside and outside the passionate activity is persistence (Vallerand et al., 2023). The DMP posits that one way to seek self-growth is through heavy involvement in activities people love and care about. In so doing, people persist in their involvement in attempting to reach their goals. However, the DMP makes the important postulate that the two types of passion should lead to two different ways in persisting on

**Figure 3***Results of Path Analyses Showing the Relations Between Passion, Achievement Goals, and OFIS Components*

Note.  $N = 184$ . Standardized  $\beta$  values are presented. OFIS = optimal functioning in society. From "The Role of Passion and Achievement Goals in Optimal Functioning in Sports," by J. St-Cyr, R. J. Vallerand, and L. A. Chénard-Poirier, 2021, *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(17), Article 9023 (<https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18179023>). CC BY.

\*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

the activity people are passionate about: flexible and rigid persistence. Research has shown that HP has been found to allow the person to mindfully engage in the activity (St-Louis et al., 2018), thereby ensuring some flexibility in pursuing activity goals. This flexibility should allow the person to disengage when the time comes to attend to other activities and needs in the person's life. Conversely, with OP, one experiences external and internal pressures to engage in the beloved activity such as feelings of social acceptance and self-esteem contingencies (Mageau et al., 2011), lower levels of mindfulness (St-Louis et al., 2018), and high levels of ego involvement and threat (Lavoie et al., 2021). Such processes all entail some rigidity. Persistence associated with OP should then be rigid, thereby explaining why OP may lead one to focus almost exclusively on the passionate activity while neglecting other life pursuits. This reasoning is in line with research that shows that OP (but not HP) predicts developing addiction for several activities (Holding et al., 2021; Lafrenière et al., 2009). In sum, HP should lead to flexible, and OP to rigid, persistence. Of importance, both types of persistence should lead to activity outcomes, whereas only flexible persistence should lead to adaptive outcomes outside the activity in the person's life.

In light of the above, with Tanya Chichekian, now a professor at the Université de Sherbrooke, and other colleagues, we launched a series of six studies (Vallerand et al., 2023) to test the above hypotheses with workers, students, dancers, and other participants. In addition to validating the Rigid and Flexible Persistence Scale, the overall findings provided strong support for the hypotheses. For instance, in one study with dancers from the Montreal community (Vallerand et al., 2023, Study 4), HP for dancing strongly predicted flexible persistence (and slightly and positively predicted rigid persistence), whereas

OP positively predicted rigid persistence (and negatively flexible persistence). In turn, both rigid and flexible persistence positively predicted overcoming obstacles in dancing, thereby underscoring the role of both types of persistence in successfully navigating the dancing world. However, only flexible persistence positively predicted having vitality in one's life at the same time as overcoming dancing obstacles. The findings of the Vallerand et al. (2023) series of studies were replicated in other studies in education (see also Chichekian & Vallerand, 2022) and workers in Brazil (Peixoto et al., 2023).

A final mediating process that we have looked at is positive emotions. As mentioned previously, the research of Fredrickson (2001) has shown the adaptive role that positive emotions play in a number of outcomes and situations, and this includes adapting to stressors. Thus, if HP leads to positive emotions, then it should set in motion the resilience process and allow people to grow in the face of adversity. However, OP should not facilitate such process as it also triggers negative emotions. By doing so, OP undermines the resilience process. Three recent series of studies of ours with Virginie Paquette, now at Concordia University, and other colleagues (Paquette et al., 2023a, 2023b; Rahimi et al., 2023) have provided support for this model within the sphere of education. In the first two series of studies, resilience was assessed both within the activity (education) where stressors were either assessed (the stress of end-of-semester exams; Paquette et al., 2023a) or experimentally induced (failing at an important educational task; Rahimi et al., 2023). Then outcomes were assessed both inside education and outside of education in other areas of one's life. Results of the first two series of studies revealed that HP for education leads one to experience positive emotions amidst stressful events that, in turn, lead one to

experience adaptive outcomes both in education and one's life in general such as psychological well-being. While OP leads to some limited positive emotions, it predicts mostly negative emotions that exacerbate the stress of the situation and thus undermine the resilience process and outcomes. Thus, in these studies, HP led to global resilience (both in education and one's life), whereas OP led to limited resilience at best, especially inside education through its limited positive effects on positive emotions.

In the third and final series of studies on resilience (Paquette et al., 2023b), we looked at how people adapt during a pandemic (COVID-19). In three studies, we found that having a passion for any kind of activity will help people adapting better to the pandemic only if the passion is harmonious in nature (not so much if it is obsessive). In addition, when prevented from engaging in the regular passionate activity, developing a new activity that is harmonious in nature will also lead to better adaptation than having an OP for it. Once more, these positive effects of HP are mediated by positive affect, whereas the negative effects of OP are mediated by negative emotions. These findings are in line with those of Besser et al. (2022) on the role of positive experiences as key agents in adapting well to difficult transitions, such as having to take courses online rather than at school, and those of Houliort et al. (2015) on the transition from work to retirement. Such transition demands flexibility. In light of the rigidity that OP entails, it is not surprising that people with OP did not do well during the pandemic, relative to those with HP who display more flexibility. In sum, overall, when facing adversity, HP for an activity (new or recurrent) leads to better adaptation than OP, and thus resilience, and even more so during the transition. It would thus appear that future research on this issue is in order while assessing the mediating role of rigid and flexible persistence.

### Caveats

The research presented in this article yields strong support for the DMP. Because this article is associated with the Gold Medal Award from the Canadian Psychological Association, I selected mostly research coming from my own lab. However, I want to reassure the reader that thousands of studies conducted by other scientists yield the same basic support for the DMP. In addition, although self-reports have been often used in our research, other measures were also used, such as objective performance and informant reports, yielding the same findings. Of additional importance is the fact that most of the studies presented used correlational designs. This raises the causality issue. However, other research using cross-lagged panel designs (e.g., Lavigne et al., 2012), longitudinal designs (Carboneau et al., 2008; Philippe et al., 2009), and of course experimental designs (in which HP and OP are experimentally induced) has led to the same findings as those with the Passion Scale (e.g., Bélanger et al., 2013a; Lafrenière et al., 2013; Vallerand et al., 2023). Perhaps a final caveat deals with how OP has been portrayed in the present article. I underscore that the role of OP in self-growth while being much less adaptive than HP, and at times clearly maladaptive, may still be adaptive at times. For instance, our work with B. J. I. Schellenberg et al. (2019) at the University of Manitoba has shown that sometimes OP can coexist with HP at a high level within the person. In such cases, the effects of OP are much less negative than when OP dominates in the absence of HP. Others have found similar findings (Astakhova et al., 2023; Gillet et al., 2023). Thus, OP may not always lead to maladaptive effects. Future research

on this issue is important. In sum, overall, there is strong support for the validity of the findings reported in this article.

### Conclusion

The purpose of the present article was to present some of the research that I have been fortunate to conduct with my students and colleagues on the concept of passion in self-growth and outcomes over the past 20 years. In so doing, I have presented the DMP (e.g., Vallerand, 2010, 2015; Vallerand & Houliort, 2019; Vallerand et al., 2003) and some of the research that it has generated, especially from my lab. The research reviewed in this article leads to a number of conclusions. I focus here on only three. First, there is an overwhelming support for the DMP. The DMP opened up the field in 2003 and is still the dominant theory on passion. The model presents a clear definition of passion and makes the added hypothesis of the existence of two types of passion, namely HP and OP. Such an assumption allows the DMP to resolve the issue on the adaptive or maladaptive nature of passion underscored by philosophers. Our empirical research was able to show that passion can have both adaptive and maladaptive effects; it depends on the type of passion, HP or OP. Research presented herein provided strong support for the existence of the two types of passion as well as for the processes and outcomes that the DMP posits that they entail.

The second major conclusion is that passion matters with respect to self-growth and development. The good news is that most people are passionate. Thus, typically, most of us should be able to use the *power* of passion to achieve self-growth and optimal functioning that we dearly strive for. We have also seen that two major types of self-growth exist: one that pertains to the passionate activity and the other that deals with other life pursuits outside the passionate activity. Of importance, the type of passion is key in determining which type of self-growth will be achieved. We have seen that HP leads to both types of self-growth and optimal functioning, whereas OP leads to an impoverished and limited self-growth. While some self-growth takes place with OP within the purview of the passionate activity, such personal development comes at the cost of personal growth in other life pursuits. For instance, while it may lead to positive performance in the short term on the passionate activity, OP is also likely to lead to a number of maladaptive outcomes mentioned in this article such as burnout, failed relationships, and diminished health and psychological well-being outside the activity. Thus, although OP can be very powerful, we also need to attend to the *perils* associated with it. Our research on the determinants of passion (see Lalonde et al., 2017; Vallerand, 2015), not mentioned here due to space limitations, is important to consider when drafting the blueprints allowing one to navigate life currents while using the power of passion but minimizing its perils in the search for self-growth.

A third and final conclusion is that research on passion applies widely to most people. Research in Canada and in a number of countries and cultures reveals that most people are passionate for at least one activity in their lives and devote several hours weekly to it (see Vallerand et al., 2003). It may not be passion for work or for school, but most people have found passion in one area of their lives. Further, the findings obtained in thousands of studies reveal that they apply to men and women, of different cultures, of different ages, and hundreds of activities (see Marsh et al., 2013;

Philippe et al., 2009; Vallerand & Rahimi, 2022). In addition, because passion is omnipresent in people's lives, such research has been conducted with a variety of real-life participants from athletes, to musicians, actors, painters, dancers, teachers, nurses, administrators, video gamers, and gamblers, and others of various ages across the lifespan. In other words, passion, and especially HP, contributes to self-growth for most people across the lifespan in various cultures and a host of different activities. In this regard, attention to those who may not have found passion in their lives (or who have lost it) would appear important. The reader is referred to St-Cyr et al. (2024) on how to generate passion for an activity.

In sum, the past 40 years have been a blast. There are no regrets, except for the fact that it went by all too quickly, and the last 20 on the construct of passion, especially. I have been lucky to benefit from solid mentors at Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières, McGill University, Université de Montréal, and especially the University of Waterloo who prepared me well for this journey. Without their guidance and support, and that of colleagues, friends, my research team, and other scientists elsewhere (without forgetting my team at home), I would not find myself in the present position of writing this article associated with the Gold Medal Award, and I am deeply grateful. When I started my academic journey, I formulated three major goals: (a) to propose novel theoretical frameworks that would lead to a better understanding of motivational processes; (b) to shed light on important real-life phenomena using such theories; and (c) to train future motivation scientists. A look back reveals that although the job is not done yet, we nevertheless have made some important progress on these three fronts. It is comforting that the new generations of motivated scientists will be in a better position to take the baton and take it even farther than I did! In so doing, their passion for the science of psychology will no doubt allow them to contribute to it significantly. I suggest doing it harmoniously!

## Résumé

Dans cet article associé à la médaille d'or de la Société canadienne de psychologie, je présente une vue d'ensemble des recherches sur le concept de la passion que mon équipe de recherche et moi-même avons menées au cours des 20 dernières années. Ces recherches s'inscrivent dans une vision organismique de la condition humaine, dans laquelle les individus sont considérés comme des agents actifs qui s'efforcent de se développer et de fonctionner de manière optimale. Le modèle dualiste de la passion (Vallerand et al., 2003) postule que la passion fournit le pouvoir de rechercher et d'atteindre l'épanouissement personnel, ainsi que les dangers dans cette quête d'épanouissement personnel. Nous présentons d'abord le modèle dualiste de la passion, puis les recherches menées dans divers contextes et activités qui étayaient cette affirmation sur la dualité de la passion. Ce faisant, nous montrons que toutes les passions ne sont pas égales et que certaines d'entre elles (la passion harmonieuse) favorisent l'épanouissement personnel et un fonctionnement optimal plus que d'autres (la passion obsessionnelle). Quelques conclusions sont proposées.

**Mots-clés :** passion harmonieuse, passion obsessionnelle, modèle dualiste de la passion, croissance personnelle, fonctionnement optimal

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(Appendix follows)

## Appendix

### The Passion Scale

Describe an activity that you love, that is important for you, and in which you spend a significant amount of time.

This activity is \_\_\_\_\_

While thinking of the activity selected above and using the scale below, please indicate your level of agreement with each item.

| Not Agree<br>at All<br>1                                                                  | Very Slightly<br>Agree<br>2 | Slightly<br>Agree<br>3 | Moderately<br>Agree<br>4 | Mostly<br>Agree<br>5 | Strongly<br>Agree<br>6 | Very Strongly<br>Agree<br>7 |   |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| 1. This activity is in harmony with the other activities in my life.                      | 1                           | 2                      | 3                        | 4                    | 5                      | 6                           | 7 |
| 2. I have difficulties controlling my urge to do my activity.                             | 1                           | 2                      | 3                        | 4                    | 5                      | 6                           | 7 |
| 3. The new things that I discover with this activity allow me to appreciate it even more. | 1                           | 2                      | 3                        | 4                    | 5                      | 6                           | 7 |
| 4. I have almost an obsessive feeling for this activity.                                  | 1                           | 2                      | 3                        | 4                    | 5                      | 6                           | 7 |
| 5. This activity reflects the qualities I like about myself.                              | 1                           | 2                      | 3                        | 4                    | 5                      | 6                           | 7 |
| 6. This activity allows me to live a variety of experiences.                              | 1                           | 2                      | 3                        | 4                    | 5                      | 6                           | 7 |
| 7. This activity is the only thing that really turns me on.                               | 1                           | 2                      | 3                        | 4                    | 5                      | 6                           | 7 |
| 8. My activity is well integrated in my life.                                             | 1                           | 2                      | 3                        | 4                    | 5                      | 6                           | 7 |
| 9. If I could, I would only do my activity.                                               | 1                           | 2                      | 3                        | 4                    | 5                      | 6                           | 7 |
| 10. My activity is in harmony with other things that are part of me.                      | 1                           | 2                      | 3                        | 4                    | 5                      | 6                           | 7 |
| 11. This activity is so exciting that I sometimes lose control over it.                   | 1                           | 2                      | 3                        | 4                    | 5                      | 6                           | 7 |
| 12. I have the impression that my activity controls me.                                   | 1                           | 2                      | 3                        | 4                    | 5                      | 6                           | 7 |
| 13. I spend a lot of time doing this activity.                                            | 1                           | 2                      | 3                        | 4                    | 5                      | 6                           | 7 |
| 14. I love this activity.                                                                 | 1                           | 2                      | 3                        | 4                    | 5                      | 6                           | 7 |
| 15. This activity is important for me.                                                    | 1                           | 2                      | 3                        | 4                    | 5                      | 6                           | 7 |
| 16. This activity is a passion for me.                                                    | 1                           | 2                      | 3                        | 4                    | 5                      | 6                           | 7 |
| 17. This activity is part of who I am                                                     | 1                           | 2                      | 3                        | 4                    | 5                      | 6                           | 7 |

#### CODIFICATION

# 2, 4, 7, 9, 11, 12

**Obsessive Passion**

# 1, 3, 5, 6, 8, 10

**Harmonious Passion**

# 13 à 17

**Passion Criteria**

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Received February 13, 2024

Accepted February 15, 2024 ■