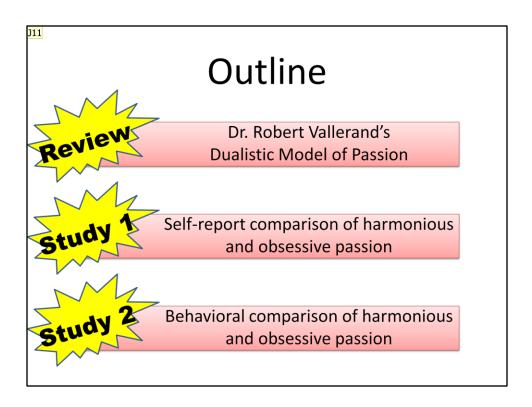




Obsessive passions may reflect executive control problems.

By: Jonathan Bridekirk
Co-Supervisors: Dr. B. Oddson & Dr. J. Turcotte
Committee Member: Dr. E. Levin

Hello everyone, my name is Jonathan Bridekirk, and I am here today to present to you part of my Master's research. The title of this project is "obsessive passions may reflect executive control problems". My supervisors were Dr. Bruce Oddson and Dr. Josee Turcotte and my committee member was Dr. Elizabeth Levin.



I will begin my presentation by stating that this was an exploratory study — and it consisted of two separate studies. Each study used a different sample of individuals and measured individuals based on their passionate activity — and this is an activity that individuals had hand selected as a passion of their own, and were measured based on this activity that they provided.

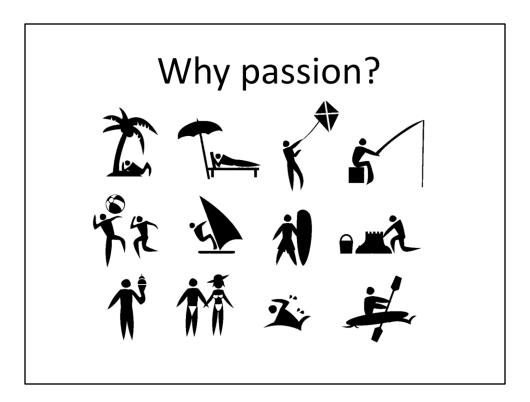
So...

I will begin by briefly reviewing the literature on passion, specifically Dr. Robert Vallerand's Dualistic Model of Passion...

Then I will go into the 1st study – which is a self-report study, and it measured individuals' passion using a series of self-report measures.

Then I will go into the 2nd study – which is more of a laboratory study, and a continuation from study 1, but this time instead of using self-report measures, behavioral measures were used instead.

This is just for everyone to keep in mind, and consider as I begin exploring the literature and provided research.



Every day we take part in various activities. Yet not all these activities define who we are, or how we choose to live. Yet some activities we take part in are special to us; they are more than just a day-in and day out activity. They are something more, something personally significant and meaningful.



According to Dr. Robert Vallerand, some activities we choose to engage in, such as leisure activities, and some we don't, such as work or school. But when we begin to show preference for an activity, we begin to attain satisfaction from this activity, and by satisfying our own needs, we become motivated to continue this type of engagement in the future.

In this case the development of passion for at least one activity could be an essential building block in a positive life and the experience of individual happiness.

Dualistic Model of Passion



Yet according to Vallerand's Dualistic Model of Passion, not all passions are ideal. Some passions can arouse negative emotions, lead to inflexible persistence, and prevent individuals from achieving a balanced and successful lifestyle.

Dualistic Model of Passion

HARMONIOUS

- · Autonomous and free
- Positive experiences

"This activity allows me to live a variety of experiences."

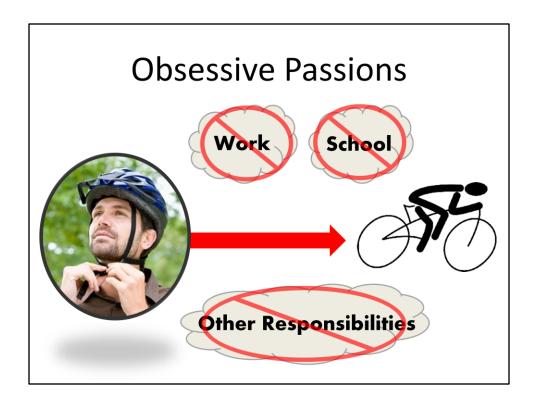


OBSESSIVE

- · Controlling and rigid
- Negative experiences

"I have difficulties controlling my urge to do my activity."

According to the model, there are two varying forms of passion: there are harmonious passions and there are obsessive passions. Harmonious passions are positively related to well-being, whereas obsessive passions are not. Vallerand has demonstrated this based on the different emotional states experienced by each type of passion. For example, individuals with a harmonious passion experience more positive emotions when engaged in their activity compared to individuals with an obsessive passion.

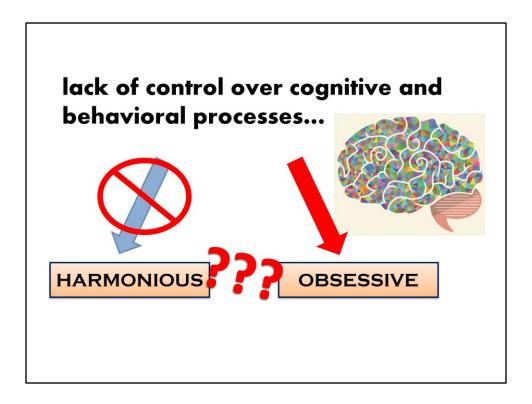


What is really separating obsessive passions from harmonious passions?

Already research has demonstrated that the rigidity and persistence associated with obsessive passions prevents individuals from engaging in activities that are not their passionate activity. They are more likely to ruminate about their activity, and demonstrate lower concentration when taking part in activities that are not their passionate activity.

Vallerand has suggested that obsessive passions could stem from a lack of control over cognitive and behavioral processes.

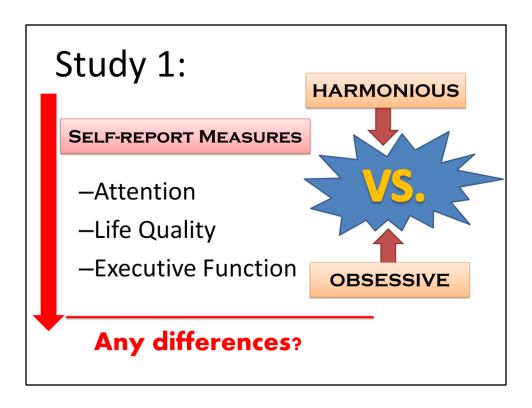
If this is true, then maybe this is something can measure...



Maybe there is some sort of cognitive or behavioral process that is leading some individuals to developing an obsessive passion compared to a harmonious passion, and as a result creating an inflexibility and rigid value system that prevents individuals from attaining positive experiences from their activity?

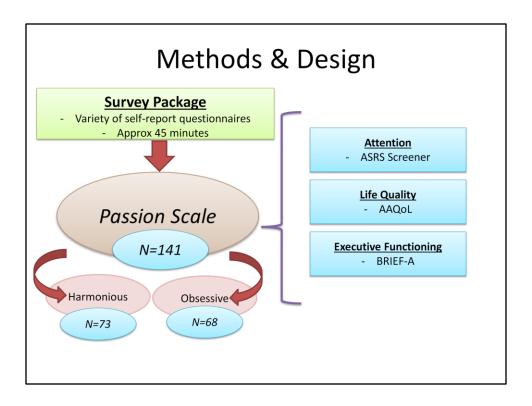


And this leads to the first study...which measured individuals' passion using a series of self-report measures.



This first study investigated the roles of attention, life quality, and executive function to capture different behavioral and cognitive processes and to distinguish individuals who report having an obsessive passion for an activity compared to those reporting a harmonious passion for an activity.

A theoretical case was made here, that if obsessively passionate individuals are demonstrating a lack of control over their passionate activity due to differences in cognitive or behavioral processes, then perhaps we will be able to identify it with these measures. Obsessively passionate individuals may report more experienced difficulties in relation to their activity, whereas harmoniously passionate individuals may report less.

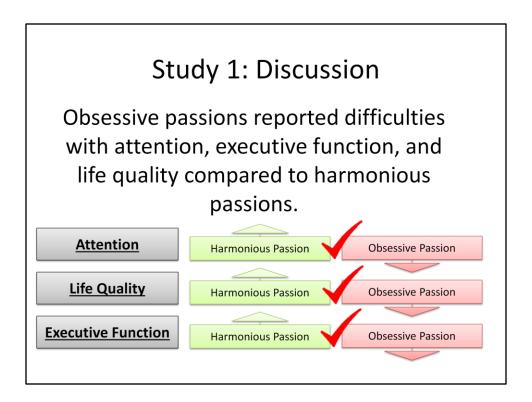


Methods and design... So all participants in this 1st study were volunteers from Laurentian University. The mean age was 24 years; and 64% of the sample were female.

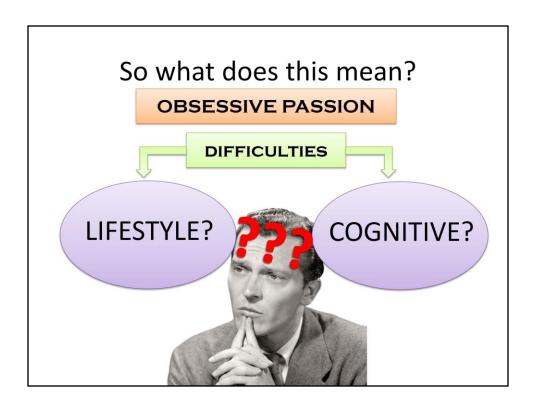
Individuals were initially measured on the passion scale, which was developed by Dr. Vallerand, to determine their passion orientation. Individuals wrote down an activity they were passionate about and were classified based on whether their passion orientation was harmonious or obsessive. As you can see it was almost a 50/50 split between harmonious and obsessive passion. After individuals were classified based on their passion orientation, they were then compared across the other self-report measures, which included, attention, life quality, and executive functioning.

Study 1: MANOVA Results							
Total Scores	Obsessive Passion	Harmonious Passion M (SD)	MANOVA				
	M (SD)		F (1,134)	р	n²		
Attention (ASRS-Screener)	18.71 (3.60)	17.50 (3.19)	4.283	0.040	0.031		
Life Score (AAQoL)	68.60 (7.95)	72.23 (7.76)	7.185	0.008	0.051		
Health Score (AAQoL)	35.39 (6.46)	36.33 (6.98)	0.665	0.416	0.005		
Executive Functioning (BRIEF-A)	121.65 (20.51)	111.73 (18.77)	8.612	0.004	0.061		

And here are the results... When looking at overall scores we can see a significant relationship being demonstrated for attention, life quality, and executive function. Obsessively passionate individuals were demonstrating more difficulties in attention, life quality, and executive function compared to harmoniously passionate individuals. Only one aspect of life quality was not significant between harmonious and obsessive passion...

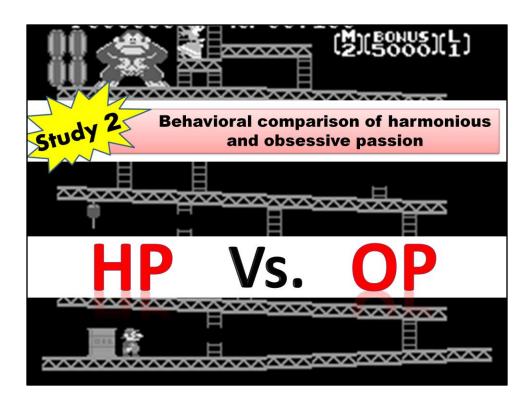


So this first study is showing what was hypothesized by our team and mention by Robert Vallerand... that there could be potential cognitive or behavioral difficulties being experienced with obsessive passions. This is interesting, because this adds new insights to Vallerand's Dualistic Model of Passion... As we have been able to demonstrate here, there are potentially other factors that determine whether an activity becomes harmonious or obsessive and how the activity is internalized. In this case, motivation and values are not the only factors that characterize harmonious and obsessive passions.

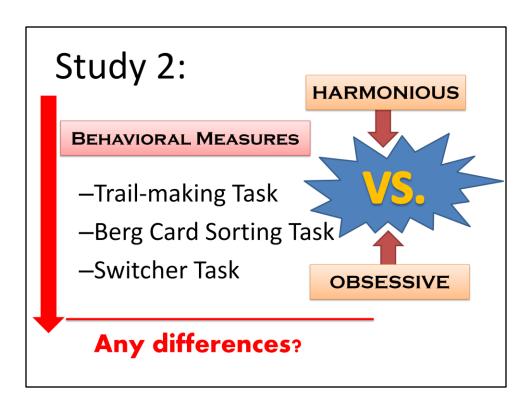


Yet the results from our 1st study pose a new set of questions we need to answer... Are people with an obsessive passion truly demonstrating difficulties with cognitive or behavioral processes?... Or are the difficulties we uncovered more just a marker of a busier lifestyle? May be individuals with an obsessive passion are busier people compared to individuals with a harmonious passion, and as a result demonstrate more difficulties when it comes to engaging and disengaging from their activity.

And this what would be considered as a potential limitation with this first study... We cannot tell the difference on whether our results demonstrate a true cognitive inflexibility for obsessively passionate individuals or just an artifact between groups.

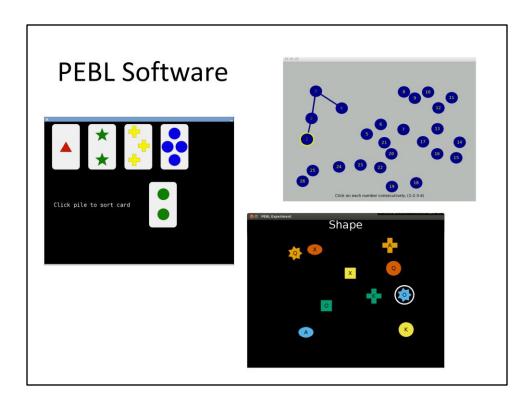


And this leads to the second study...which measured individuals' passion in a laboratory setting, using a series of behavioral measures. Behavioral measures were used in order to determine how much this lack of cognitive or behavioral control is predetermined or based more on one's environment and lifestyle?

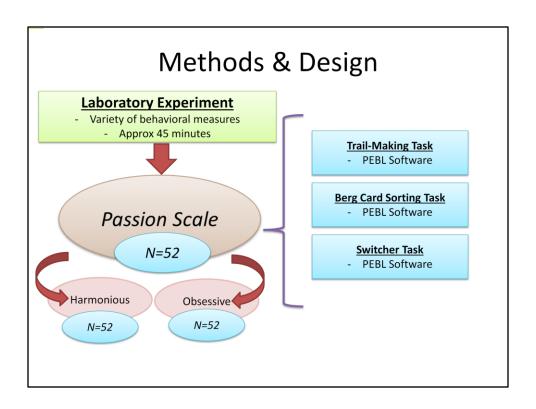


This second study used three behavioral measures to determine if there is any differences in cognitive flexibility between individuals who report having an obsessive passion for an activity compared to those reporting a harmonious passion for an activity.

If obsessively passionate individuals are demonstrating a lack of control over their passionate activity as demonstrated in the 1st study, then perhaps we will be able to replicate this with these three behavioral measures. This is really a method of validating our results in the 1st study and determining how specific the problems with cognitive and behavior really is. Perhaps my using these three behavioral measures, we will be able to pinpoint certain cognitive or behavioral processes that differentiate between obsessive and harmonious passion.



So all three behavioral measures were provided using PEBL Software – which is an psychology experiment building language. And here is a screen shot of how each task looked on the computer screen. We the trail-making task, the card sorting task, and the switcher task. Each of the three tasks measures different types of cognitive process that all fall under the umbrella term executive functioning.

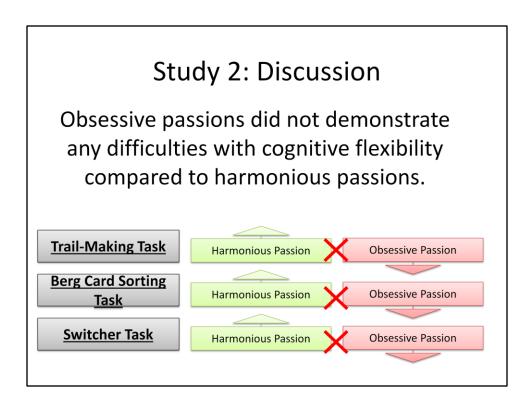


Methods and design... So all participants in this 2nd study were volunteers from Laurentian University. The mean age was 19.6; 78.8% were female.

Individuals were measured using the passion scale and were scored on both the harmonious and obsessive passion subscales. And then compared across the 3 behavioral measures.

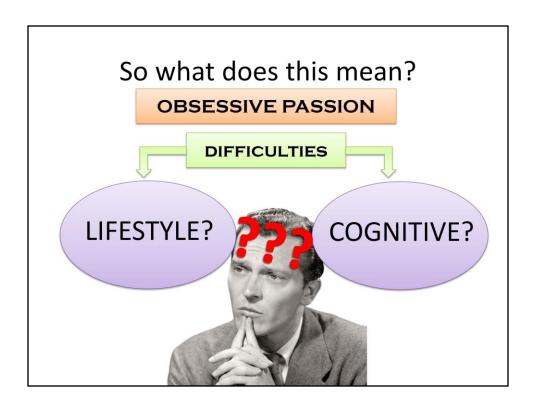
Total Scores	Obsessive Passion	Passion Mean Square	MANOVA		
	Mean Square		F (1,51)	р	n²
Trail-Making Task (PEBL Software)	1.70	0.83	0.939	0.598	0.615
Berg Card Sorting Task (PEBL Software)	1.00	0.74	0.618	0.944	0.268
Switcher Task (PEBL Software)	3.05	1.50	1.684	0.097	0.158

And here are the results... When looking at overall scores it was evident that there was NO significant relationship being demonstrated on any of the 3 behavioral measures, when comparing obsessive and harmonious passion scores. Obsessively passionate individuals demonstrated the same cognitive flexibility and behavioral processes as their harmonious counterparts. So there is not any differences being reported between harmonious and obsessively passionate individuals.



So this second study is showing no clear differences between obsessive and harmonious passions in terms of cognitive or behavioral process. This is actually more in line with Vallerand's model, as this suggests that it is not a behavioral or cognitive issue that obsessively passionate individuals face, but more of a problem with how they have come to identify with their activity.

Although our previous study found differences between obsessive and harmonious passion, we suggest those difference are more related to everyday living, than cognitive inflexibility, as the behavioral measures used in this 2nd study measured a very narrow scope of executive functioning.



So if we are to return to our original question posed after study 1, do people with an obsessive passion truly demonstrating difficulties with cognitive or behavioral processes?... Or are the difficulties we uncovered more just a marker of a busier lifestyle? As this point we would have to suggest that it is the lifestyle obsessively passionate individuals lead that make their passions more obsessive and as a result, provides less positive experiences.

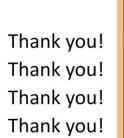
Final Word

- There are benefits to developing passion
- Cognitive capacities are not different for obsessive and harmonious passions.
- Lifestyle choices can impact passion more so.
- Expand your interests and develop your passions.
- Support your passions to be harmonious with your life.

There are benefits to developing passion. Regardless of individuals' capacities or attentional resources, passion is prevalent in everyone. Simple cognitive processes such as flexibility, attention, or executive functioning, do not seem to influence how a passion is developed. But there is a trade off. Lifestyle choices can impact passion – an whether it is considered to be a healthy passion or not.

It can be argued that when one's lifestyle begins to impede their attention, executive function, and life quality, then one's passion is more likely to falter.

Having a passion can be beneficial and provide a lot of positive experience as long as they remain balanced. So support and nurture your passions, but keep them harmonious with other parts of your life.



Thank you!

Thank you!

Thank you!

Thank you!

