

“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

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Abstract Using the dualistic perspective on romantic passion (Ratelle et al. in *Motiv Emot* 37:106–120, 2013; Vallerand et al. in *J Pers Soc Psychol* 85:756–767, 2003), the present research examined the role of harmonious and obsessive romantic passion in the prediction of personal changes in people’s lives associated with romantic relationships. Young adults recruited through universities (Studies 1 and 2) and social networking sites (Studies 2 and 3) composed the samples of the three studies. Results of Study 1 revealed that harmonious and obsessive passion both positively predicted perceptions of personal growth while they respectively negatively and positively predicted disengagement from important activities and other social relationships for the sake of the romantic relationship. These associations were either fully replicated (for harmonious passion) or partially replicated (for obsessive passion) when examined using a six-month longitudinal design (Study 2) and when the two outcomes (i.e., personal growth and social disengagement) were reported by an informant (Study 3). Overall, the results suggest that the nature and extent of changes in people’s lives as they

become romantically involved may be predicted by the quality of their romantic passion.

Keywords Romantic passion · Dualistic model of passion · Personal growth · Personal changes

Introduction

Romantic relationships have the power to provoke great changes in people’s lives. Some of these changes touch the personal self—being in a romantic relationship affects who one is as a person (e.g., Aron et al. 2001; Rusbult et al. 2009). For example, some people report a growth of the self resulting from their romantic involvement (Sedikides et al. 1994). Getting involved in a romantic relationship is also likely to bring about structural changes in one’s life, as it often requires a reorganization of one’s time and activities. Romantic relationships may thus affect the structure and organization of the various spheres of a person’s life. For example, people’s involvement in activities outside the relationship may diminish as they grow closer to their romantic partner. Similarly, some individuals find it hard to manage time for friends and family because their romantic relationship is taking up all space in their life. It is well accepted that people may change when they become involved in a new romance, but little is known about the personal factors likely to affect the extent and nature of these changes (Sedikides et al. 1994). The main purpose of the present research is to examine whether distinct types of romantic involvement are associated with different changes in one’s life and self. The Dualistic Model of Romantic Passion (Ratelle et al. 2013; Vallerand et al. 2003) offers a promising framework to examine such questions as it allows for the distinction between two forms of romantic involvement—one arguably healthier than the other.

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When romantic relationships are associated with personal growth

Personal growth refers to personal development in the direction of greater self-knowledge, increased effectiveness, and actualization of one's potential (Ryff and Keyes 1995). It is often suggested that major life events, especially difficult ones, are those from which people are most likely to grow (Roepke and Seligman 2015). A large body of literature specifically focuses on posttraumatic growth, that is, the growth of the self following a traumatic event such as a life-threatening disease or the death of a close one (Tedeschi and Calhoun 1996). But authors have postulated that positive events (such as entering a new romantic relationship) can also result in personal growth (Roepke 2013). Not surprisingly, according to Sedikides et al. (1994), personal growth is one of the major benefits associated with being involved in a romantic relationship. As suggested by research on the Michelangelo phenomenon (e.g., Drigotas et al. 1999), partners in harmonious relationships influence one another in such a manner as to bring both individuals closer to their ideal selves. This is also consistent with research by Aron et al. (1995) revealing that after falling in love, people report increased self-efficacy and self-esteem.

One potential mechanism that can help explain how romantic relationships have the potential to lead to personal growth is found within the self-expansion model (Aron and Aron 1986, 1996, 1997, Aron et al. 1991, 2004). This motivational model posits that people are driven to enter and maintain relationships in order to experience self-expansion. An expansion of the self is attained through inclusion of the partner and his/her resources, perspectives, and characteristics in the self (Aron et al. 1991). As Aron et al. (2004, p.102) put it: "Close relationships constantly and deeply shape, create, and recreate the self." The self-expansion model suggests that expanding the sense of self is an important element related to perceiving high relationship quality (Lewandowski and Aron 2004). Thus, being involved in a romantic relationship would lead to personal growth through the sharing of resources, perspectives, and characteristics between the partners (Aron and Aron 1986; Aron et al. 1991).

When romantic relationships are associated with declines in social and recreational involvement outside the relationship

Developing a new relationship may have some costs for pre-existing relationships (Kelley and Thibaut 1978). The resources invested in the romantic relationship, such as the time partners spend together, leave fewer resources available for other relationships and activities (Johnson and Leslie

1982). But romantic involvement is not always associated with decreased involvement with other members of the social network. While some individuals neglect their family when they find a romantic partner (Slater 1963), other couples increase their involvement with their families as they grow closer (Johnson and Leslie 1982). Some evidence also suggests that romantic relationships can even strengthen ties with friends (Connolly and Goldberg 1999). Undoubtedly, there is great variation in the extent to which romantic involvement affects the pre-existing social network. It is plausible that romantic relationships of differing quality may have distinct impacts on people's social and recreational involvement outside the relationship (Zimmer-Gembeck 2002). Clearly, individuals who enter a romantic relationship are not all likely to experience declines in their social and recreational involvements outside the relationship. Similarly, there should be important individual differences in the degree of personal growth experienced by people who are involved in a romantic relationship. In line with recent research on the Dualistic Model of Passion (Ratelle et al. 2013), we believe that one possible source of these individual differences lies in people's predominant type of romantic passion, namely either harmonious or obsessive.

The dualistic model of passion and how it applies to romantic relationships

Vallerand and colleagues (e.g., Vallerand 2010, 2015, Vallerand et al. 2003) have developed a theoretical model for the study of passion toward activities, namely the Dualistic Model of Passion. Passion is defined as a strong inclination toward a self-defining activity that one likes (or loves), deems important, and in which one invests a significant amount of time and energy. Two types of passion are distinguished: harmonious and obsessive passion. Harmonious passion emanates from an autonomous internalization (e.g., Deci and Ryan 2000) of a cherished activity (including a romantic relationship) into a person's identity. This type of passion is at play when individuals freely accept a beloved activity as important for them such that activity engagement is personally endorsed. Harmonious passion therefore promotes volitional and flexible involvement in the activity. Such a passion is thus in harmony with the person's other life pursuits. Conversely, obsessive passion originates from a controlled internalization (Deci and Ryan 2000) of the activity into one's identity. Individuals who have an obsessive passion feel an uncontrollable urge to engage in the beloved activity. They may therefore persist in the activity in a rigid fashion in spite of experiencing negative outcomes. With obsessive passion, the activity takes disproportionate space in one's life and can eventually lead one to neglect other life

domains. This is likely to result in significant conflict in one's life (Vallerand et al. 2003). It is important to note that recent research suggests that passion, as conceptualized by the Dualistic Model of Passion, is relatively stable regardless of age and life stages (Philippe et al. 2009).

Research has provided empirical support for the dualistic conceptualization of passion (see Vallerand 2010, 2015, for reviews). Importantly, empirical evidence has shown that the two types of passion can differently predict various affective, cognitive, and behavioral outcomes. Specifically, harmonious passion has been positively associated with concentration, absorption, and flow during activity engagement (Vallerand et al. 2003, Study 1), as well as with subjective well-being (Vallerand et al. 2008, Study 2). While harmonious passion has been shown to be positively related to a host of positive outcomes, a more complex picture has emerged for obsessive passion as it has been shown to predict both positive and negative outcomes. For example, obsessive passion has been shown to be related to negative emotions, poor concentration, increased rumination on the activity (Vallerand et al. 2003, Study 1), and a rigid task engagement (e.g., Rip et al. 2006; Vallerand et al. 2003). Nevertheless, obsessive passion has also been associated with some positive outcomes, such as some positive affect (Lafrenière et al. 2009) and approach goals (Bonneville-Roussy et al. 2011). Thus, while obsessive passion is associated with negative outcomes derived from activity engagement, it is also associated with some positive outcomes, although less so than harmonious passion.

Previous research has examined the role of passion in interpersonal relationships. First, one's passion for a given activity has been shown to influence the relationships that one develops within the purview of the activity. For instance, Lafrenière et al. (2008) found that athletes' harmonious and obsessive passion were differently related to the quality of their relationship with their coach. In addition, harmonious passion for one's job was found to lead to the development of positive interpersonal relationships at work, while obsessive passion was unrelated to the quality of these relationships (Philippe et al. 2010).

Passion for an activity can also affect the quality of one's relationships outside the purview of the passionate activity (i.e., in other spheres of one's life). For instance, Séguin-Lévesque et al. (2003) have found that obsessive passion for the Internet was positively related to conflict with one's romantic partner, while harmonious passion was unrelated to it. In the same vein, a study conducted with English soccer fans (Vallerand et al. 2008, Study 3) revealed that obsessive passion for soccer predicted conflict between one's passion for soccer and one's romantic relationship that, in turn, predicted a lower quality of romantic relationship. Conversely, harmonious passion was unrelated to conflict with one's spouse. Thus, findings of the research presented above

show that passion matters with regard to one's existing relationships and the new relationships one develops within the purview of the passionate activity.

In line with Vallerand et al. (2003), 2010), it was recently proposed that the dualistic conceptualization of passion also applies to romantic relationships (Ratelle et al. 2013). Based on the Dualistic Model of Passion (e.g., Vallerand et al. 2003), romantic passion is defined as a strong inclination toward a romantic partner that one loves and with whom one has a relationship that is deemed important and into which one invests significant time and energy (Ratelle et al. 2013). Two types of romantic passion are proposed: harmonious and obsessive romantic passion. Harmonious romantic passion is a motivational tendency whereby people willingly choose to engage in a romantic relationship with their partner. People do not feel obligated to pursue the relationship but rather do so autonomously. Their romantic involvement is in harmony with their other life domains. Conversely, obsessive romantic passion is an internal pressure that drives people to pursue a romantic relationship with their partner. With obsessive passion, people feel that the passion controls them and that they cannot help but engage in the passionate activity. Because obsessive passion takes over most of the self and comes to control the individual, this type of passion is expected to create conflicts between the romantic involvement and other important spheres of one's life (Ratelle et al. 2013).

The dualistic model of romantic passion can be contrasted to two important theoretical perspectives on passion in romantic relationships, namely Hatfield and colleagues' conceptualization of passionate love (e.g., Hatfield and Rapson 1993; Hatfield and Walster 1978) and Sternberg's Triangular Theory of Love (e.g., Sternberg 1986, 1988). According to Hatfield, passionate love is a "basic emotion" (e.g., Hatfield and Rapson 2000, p. 658) that is often mixed with other intense emotional experiences such as joy, jealousy, fear, anger, etc. Passionate love is characterized by almost total absorption in another (Hatfield and Rapson 2000). Furthermore, low self-esteem (e.g., Hatfield 1965; Reik 1949), dependency and insecurities (e.g., Berscheid et al. 1976), anxiety (e.g., Hatfield 1971; Solomon and Corbit 1974), and neediness (Stephan et al. 1971 and Hatfield 1971) would appear to increase the craving for others and the vulnerability to passion (Hatfield and Rapson 2000). For Sternberg (1988), passion is the drive that leads to romance, physical attraction, and sexual consummation. As posited by the Triangular Theory of Love (e.g., Sternberg 1986, 1988), passion—along with intimacy and commitment—is one of the three main components of love. Passion is posited to be the drive that brings people together in the first place while intimacy and commitment are necessary for the relationship to flourish and last (Sternberg, 1988). Passionate love is also part of Sternberg's

(1988) model as this type of love is posited to emerge in relationship characterized by high levels of passion and intimacy.

Conversely, the dualistic perspective of romantic passion (e.g., Ratelle et al. 2013) considers passion, not as an emotion, but as a high involvement in the relationship. The focus is on the motivational dimension of the romantic involvement. Furthermore, other theoretical models consider passion as a unidimensional construct, whereas the Dualistic Model of Passion proposes the existence of two types of romantic passion (namely harmonious and obsessive) that represent distinct ways of engaging in the relationship. These two types of passion derive from two different ways of internalizing (i.e., autonomous vs. controlled internalization) the partner into one's sense of self and are expected to predict distinct intra and interpersonal consequences (e.g., Carbonneau and Vallerand 2013; Ratelle et al. 2013). Thus, the Dualistic Model of Passion suggests that passion is a motivational construct that can differ both in terms of the quantity (high or low intensity of passion, as do the other passion models) and the quality of one's romantic engagement, with harmonious passion representing a higher quality of engagement in the relationship than obsessive passion (Vallerand et al. 2008, 2010).

Romantic passion, as described by the Dualistic Model of Passion (Vallerand et al. 2003), also differs from other relational constructs in the scientific literature on relationships. First, although obsessive romantic passion may seem similar to partner dependency, they are different constructs. Partner dependency is defined as an affective need felt by one partner in a relationship toward the romantic partner (Ruppel and Curran 2012; Rusbult and Arriaga 1997). Conversely, obsessive romantic passion is the motivational tendency toward a romantic partner; it is a rigid type of involvement in a relationship and not an excessive affective longing contrary to partner dependency (see Vallerand 2010, for a discussion of the distinction between passion and dependence). Another construct that is often studied in romantic relationships and that appears related to passion is engagement (e.g., Rusbult et al. 1998). One of the contributions of the Dualistic Model of Passion is precisely to distinguish between two types of romantic engagement that differ depending if engagement is fueled by harmonious or obsessive romantic passion. Thus, harmoniously and obsessively passionate individuals are both highly involved in their relationship, but harmonious passion is a more adaptive type of engagement as it does not encompass the entire self (Ratelle et al. 2013).

Previous research has offered support for the bidimensional conceptualization of romantic passion (see Ratelle et al. 2013). The Romantic Passion Scale was developed and support for its validity and reliability was provided by a number of studies conducted with college students as

well as adult-age participants from the general population (see Carbonneau and Vallerand 2013; Ratelle 2002; Ratelle et al. 2013). A series of three studies led by Ratelle et al. (2013) aimed to examine the consequences of the two types of romantic passion. In Study 1 ($n = 176$ undergraduate students; mean age = 25 years old), harmonious passion was found to be positively and strongly associated with various dimensions of relationship quality, whereas obsessive passion was positively associated with commitment and feelings of love, but unrelated to satisfaction, intimacy, and sexual passion, and even negatively associated with trusting one's partner. In the second study ($n = 116$ heterosexual couples; mean age = 20 years old), Ratelle et al. (2013) used a dyadic approach and replicated the findings of Study 1 with respect to intrapersonal consequences. Of additional interest, passion was also found to influence the partner's outcomes. Specifically, men's harmonious passion significantly and positively predicted women's satisfaction, intimacy, and sexual passion, over and beyond the influence of women's own passion. Interestingly, women's sexual passion also decreased with men's obsessive passion, such that the more obsessive men reported being toward their partner, the less sexually passionate women reported to be. For men, beyond the contribution of their own passion, only the satisfaction dimension was significantly and positively predicted by women's harmonious passion. It is worth mentioning that no gender differences in levels of harmonious and obsessive passion or in the correlational patterns between types of passion and relationship quality were found, thereby suggesting that the dualistic conceptualization of romantic passion is not gender-specific. Finally, results of the third study by Ratelle et al. ($n = 143$ Canadians from the general population; mean age = 27 years old) showed that harmonious and obsessive passion respectively positively and negatively predicted the likelihood of one still being involved in the same romantic relationship 3 months later.

Another series of two studies examining the associations between the two types of romantic passion and conflict behaviors was recently conducted by Carbonneau and Vallerand (2013) with samples of young adults (mean age 24–28 years old) currently involved in a romantic relationship (most of them being either married or cohabiting with their partner). Overall, in these studies, harmonious romantic passion was found to be negatively related to destructive conflict behaviors and to be positively related to reparative behaviors following conflict with one's partner. Conversely, obsessive passion was found to be positively related to destructive conflict behaviors, while unrelated to reparative behaviors following conflict. Results from this series of studies further attest to the pertinence of distinguishing obsessive from harmonious passion in the romantic arena.

The present research: on romantic passion and changes in one's life and self

Romantic relationships often engender changes in one's self-view and also in the structure of one's involvement in activities outside the relationship. Although the magnitude of these changes varies greatly between individuals—and also within individuals from one relationship to another—the personal factors that allow for the prediction of individual differences in the experience of such changes remain unclear. The main purpose of the present series of three studies was thus to examine the role of harmonious and obsessive romantic passion in two outcomes likely to result from people's involvement in a romantic relationship, namely personal growth and disengagement from relationships and activities outside the romantic relationship. The choice of these two outcome variables was based on the self-expansion model (Aron and Aron 1986, 1996, 1997, 2004, 1991), which posits that by including another person in the self, the resources, perspectives, and characteristics of that person also become part of the self, which is conducive to personal growth. Thus, because romantic passion derives from the internalization of a romantic partner in the self, personal growth should occur whether one has a harmonious or obsessive passion. However, it is not clear whether the internalization of a romantic partner into one's identity (and the investment of time and energy that goes with it) is detrimental to one's involvement in other spheres of life (e.g., leisure activities, relationships with friends and family), and if it is, whether obsessive passion is to blame.

Specifically, we hypothesized that both harmonious and obsessive romantic passion would promote a growth of self. This is posited because these two types of passion originate from an internalization of the partner and his/her resources, perspectives, and characteristics in the self (Carbonneau and Vallerand 2012). Through this process of self-expansion (Aron and Aron 1986, 1996, 1997, 2004, 1991), individuals experience an increase in the diversity and complexity of their self-concept that should translate to the perceptions that one has grown as a person (Sedikides et al. 1994). However, because harmonious passion results from an autonomous internalization of the partner in the self, it was hypothesized to be more strongly associated with personal growth than obsessive passion, which results from a controlled internalization of the partner (Carbonneau and Vallerand 2012). This would be consistent with past research showing that harmonious (vs. obsessive) passion is associated with more adaptive outcomes and represents a healthier way to be romantically involved (Carbonneau and Vallerand 2013; Ratelle et al. 2013).

While harmonious and obsessive passion are both posited to be conducive to personal growth, they are expected

to be differently related to disengagement from relationships and activities outside the romantic relationship. The development and maintenance of relationships require time and because time is a limited resource, involvement in a romantic relationship may lead to reduced involvement in other relationships and activities (see Goode 1960). Meanwhile, it has also been suggested that romantic relationships can have a positive influence on the intimacy and closeness experienced with one's friends (e.g., Connolly and Goldberg 1999). Based on the dualistic perspective on romantic passion (Ratelle et al. 2013), we believe that individuals with a harmonious romantic passion should be less likely to disengage from other relationships and activities. This is posited because with harmonious passion, an authentic self is at play, thereby allowing a volitional and flexible involvement in the romantic relationship. With such an orientation, the romantic relationship should not take all the space in the person's life, and rather, should coexist harmoniously with the other spheres of the person's life (Ratelle et al. 2013).

Conversely, we hypothesized that obsessive romantic passion would be positively related to disengaging from other relationships and activities because of the overwhelming place the romantic relationship occupies in one's life. Because individuals with an obsessive passion are so intensively devoted to their romantic relationship (Ratelle et al. 2013) we believe that they are more prone to become only focused on their relationship. They thus risk putting aside things (e.g., activities and relationships) that used to be important for them for the sake of their relationship.

In Study 1, we examined the relationships between participants' type of romantic passion and their report of two changes (i.e., personal growth and disengagement from other relationships and activities) resulting from their romantic involvement. In Study 2, we assessed participants' romantic passion and the same two outcomes, but this time twice over a six-month period in order to examine whether harmonious and obsessive passion can predict changes in outcomes over time. Finally, Study 3 aimed at replicating the pattern of results found in Studies 1 and 2 by asking informants (i.e., participants' close friends) to report on participants' personal growth and disengagement from activities and relationships outside the romantic relationship.

Study 1

The main purpose of Study 1 was to examine the relationships between the two types of romantic passion and two distinct types of consequences likely to result from romantic involvement, namely personal growth and disengagement from relationships and activities outside the

romantic relationship. As previously detailed, both harmonious and obsessive passion were expected to be positively related to personal growth, with harmonious passion more strongly so than obsessive passion. In addition, obsessive passion was expected to be positively related to disengagement from activities and relationships whereas harmonious passion was expected to be negatively related to this outcome. Relationship length, relationship quality, and an indicator of psychological functioning (i.e., depression) were also assessed and included in the analyses in order to rule out some alternative explanations for our results. Although components of relationship quality (e.g., intimacy, trust, satisfaction) were examined as consequences of the two types of passion in previous research (see Ratelle et al. 2013), relationship quality was used as a covariate in the present study as we wanted to examine whether the two types of passion could predict the two outcomes (i.e., personal growth and disengagement from activities and relationships) over and above the influence of this global indicator of relationship functioning.

Method

Participants

Participants were 129 undergraduate students (108 women, 21 men) from a large metropolitan university currently involved in a romantic relationship. Mean age was 22.13 years ($SD = 4.94$ years) and 97.7 % of participants were French Canadian. The average relationship length was 2 years and 9 months ($SD = 3$ years and 5 months). Regarding relationship status, 59 % were dating, 37 % of participants were living with their partner, and 4 % were married. Participants were recruited in class and were from various school programs.

Instruments

Demographic variables

Participants completed a demographic information section that included questions on gender, age, mother tongue, etc.

Covariates

In addition to relationship length, two covariates were assessed, namely relationship quality and depression. Relationship quality was assessed using the six-item ($\alpha = 0.84$) short form of the Perceived Relationship Quality Components Inventory (Fletcher et al. 2000). A sample item is:

“How satisfied are you with your relationship?”. Responses are scored on a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 7 (extremely).

Depression was assessed using the eight-item ($\alpha = 0.84$) version of the Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale (Melchior et al. 1993; Radloff 1977). Participants were asked to indicate how frequently they experienced each symptom within the past week. A sample item is: “I felt depressed.” Responses are scored on a four-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (rarely or none of the time) to 4 (most or all of the time).

Harmonious and obsessive passion

The two types of romantic passion were measured with the 12-item Romantic Passion Scale which possesses good psychometric properties (see Ratelle et al. 2013). A sample item for harmonious passion is: “My relationship with my partner is in harmony with other things that are part of me.” A sample item for obsessive passion is: “I almost have an obsessive feeling for my partner.” Responses are scored on a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (do not agree at all) to 7 (very strongly agree). In the present study, the Cronbach alphas of the harmonious and obsessive passion subscales were 0.86 and 0.84, respectively.

Personal growth

For the purpose of the present research, six items ($\alpha = 0.87$) were created for the assessment of personal growth. Sample items are: “Being in a relationship with my partner has ...” “... made me see life more positively” and “... brought out the best in me” (see Appendix “(Items used to assess “personal growth” and “disengagement from other relationships and activities)” for the complete scale). Responses are scored on a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (do not agree at all) to 7 (completely agree).

Disengagement from activities and other relationships

This variable was assessed with four items developed for the purposes of this study. Sample items are: “Being in a relationship with my partner has ...” “... made me neglect my relationships with my friends” and “... made me stop doing activities that I used to really enjoy” (see Appendix “(Items used to assess “personal growth” and “disengagement from other relationships and activities)” for the complete scale). Responses are scored on a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (do not agree at all) to 7 (completely agree). In the present study, the Cronbach alpha was 0.83.

Results and discussion

The means and standard deviations of the study variables are reported in Table 1. Regression analyses were carried out to determine the extent to which harmonious and obsessive passion could predict personal growth and disengagement from other activities and relationships resulting from one's romantic involvement. The results appear in Table 2. Controlling for relationship length, relationship quality, and depression, both harmonious ($\beta = 0.47$, $t [129] = 4.51$, $p < 0.001$; 95 % confidence intervals—CI [0.36, 0.81]) and obsessive ($\beta = 0.28$, $t [129] = 3.59$, $p < 0.001$; 95 % CI [0.15, 0.42]) passion positively predicted personal growth. In addition, harmonious passion ($\beta = -0.24$, $t [129] = -2.08$, $p < 0.05$; 95 % CI [-0.54, -0.01]) and obsessive passion ($\beta = 0.39$, $t [129] = 4.71$, $p < 0.001$; 95 % CI [0.21, 0.51]) were respectively negatively and positively related to individuals' perceptions that their relationship has led them to disengage from other relationships and beloved activities.

In order to test whether the harmonious passion ($\beta = 0.47$) and obsessive passion ($\beta = 0.28$) standardized beta weights were statistically different from each other, their corresponding 95 % confidence intervals were estimated via bias corrected bootstrap (1000 re-samples). Half of the average of the overlapping confidence intervals was calculated (0.063) and added to the harmonious passion beta weight lower bound (0.359), which yielded 0.423 (Cumming, 2009). As the obsessive passion upper bound estimate of 0.418 did not exceed the value of 0.423, the difference between the harmonious and obsessive passion standardized beta weights ($\Delta = 0.19$) was considered statistically significant.

The results of Study 1 supported the hypotheses. Both types of romantic passion were associated with the perception of having grown as a person because of one's romantic involvement, even if harmonious passion was more strongly related to this outcome than obsessive passion was. Having a highly obsessive romantic passion was positively related to disengaging from other spheres of life (i.e., friends, family, and activities) outside the romantic relationship, while the inverse was found with harmonious passion. These results should nevertheless be considered in light of the characteristics of the sample, composed mainly of young women involved in relationships of relatively short duration. Yet, these results should not be due to differences in relationship length, relationship quality or even depression, as these variables were controlled for in the analyses. Overall, these results offer preliminary support regarding the pertinence of distinguishing between harmonious and obsessive passion in order to predict positive and negative personal outcomes resulting from one's romantic involvement.

Study 2

The purpose of Study 2 was to use a prospective design to examine whether levels of harmonious and obsessive passion at baseline predict the two outcomes (i.e., personal growth and disengagement from other activities and relationships) 6 months later while controlling for baseline outcome values. We also tested the reverse pattern—that is whether the outcomes at Time 1 could predict the two types of passion at Time 2, while controlling for passion at Time 1. It was posited that the two types of passion at baseline would be better predictors of personal growth and disengagement at Time 2 than the other way around.

Method

Participants and procedure

The final sample¹ of participants consists of 155 Canadians (134 women, 21 men) from the province of Quebec currently involved in a romantic relationship. Mean age was 23.78 years ($SD = 4.44$ years) and 97.4 % of participants were French Canadian. The average relationship length was 3 years and 6 months ($SD = 2$ years and 9 months). Regarding relationship status, 54.2 % of participants were living with their partner, 25.8 % were dating, and 20 % were married.

Two strategies were used to recruit participants. First, undergraduate students were recruited at a large university and completed the Time 1 questionnaire in class. Second, individuals from the community were recruited on Facebook through an advertisement targeting individuals from the province of Quebec involved in a romantic relationship. People interested in taking part in the study were directed to an online survey website to complete the questionnaire. Participants were contacted 6 months later by email and were directed to an online survey website to complete a similar questionnaire. The final sample (80 % originally recruited through the advertisement on Facebook) consists of participants who completed both the Time 1 and Time 2 questionnaires and who were still involved with the same partner at Time 2.

¹ A total of 596 participants completed the Time 1 questionnaire, accepted to be contacted again for the follow-up study, and provided a valid email address. These participants were contacted by email 6 months later and 26 % of them ($n = 155$) fully completed the follow-up questionnaire and were still in a relationship with the same romantic partner. These participants represent the final sample.

Table 1 Means and standard deviations for main variables in Studies 1 to 3

Subscales	Study 1 (n = 129)		Study 2 (n = 155)		Study 3 (n = 99)	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Harmonious passion (Time 1)	5.72	0.91	5.95	0.75	5.73	0.94
Harmonious passion (Time 2)	–	–	5.80	0.89	–	–
Obsessive passion (Time 1)	2.66	1.16	2.89	1.18	2.86	1.04
Obsessive passion (Time 2)	–	–	2.65	1.01	–	–
Personal growth (Time 1)	4.94	1.18	5.35	0.98	–	–
Personal growth (Time 2)	–	–	5.29	1.14	–	–
Personal growth (peer report)	–	–	–	–	4.45	1.18
Disengagement from other relationships and activities (Time 1)	1.93	1.07	1.92	1.10	–	–
Disengagement from other relationships and activities (Time 2)	–	–	1.91	1.02	–	–
Disengagement from other relationships and activities (peer report)	–	–	–	–	2.37	1.41

Means and standard deviations come from seven-point Likert-type scales

Table 2 Regression analysis for variables predicting personal growth and disengagement from relationship and activities: Study 1

Variable	Personal growth				Disengagement from other relationships and activities			
	B	SEB	β	R ²	B	SEB	β	R ²
Relationship length	0.00	0.00	0.05	0.39	0.00	0.00	0.04	0.30
Depression	–0.08	0.18	0.04		0.31	0.18	0.16 [†]	
Relationship quality	0.10	0.15	0.07		0.05	0.15	–0.04	
Harmonious passion	0.61	0.14	0.47***		–0.28	0.13	–0.24*	
Obsessive passion	0.28	0.08	0.28***		0.36	0.08	0.39***	

[†] $p < 0.10$; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

Instruments

Demographic variables

Participants completed a demographic information section that included questions on gender, age, relationship length, etc.

Harmonious and obsessive passion

The Romantic Passion Scale (Ratelle et al. 2013) was again used and the Cronbach alphas of the harmonious and obsessive passion subscales were respectively 0.79 and 0.80 at Time 1, and 0.86 and 0.75 at Time 2.

Personal growth

The same scale as in Study 1 was used and the Cronbach alpha of this scale was 0.83 at Time 1 and 0.89 at Time 2.

Disengagement from activities and other relationships

The same scale as in Study 1 was used. In the present study, the Cronbach alpha of this scale was 0.83 at both Time 1 and Time 2.

Results and discussion

The means and SD of the study variables are reported in Table 1. Regression analyses were carried out to determine the extent to which harmonious and obsessive passion at baseline could predict personal growth and disengagement from activities and relationships 6 months later, while controlling for relationship length and baseline outcome values. The results appear in Table 3. Controlling for relationship length and baseline personal growth, harmonious passion was found to positively predict personal growth at Time 2 ($\beta = 0.23$, $t [155] = 2.91$, $p < 0.001$; 95 % confidence intervals—CI [0.13, 0.55]), but obsessive

Table 3 Regression analysis for variables predicting personal growth and disengagement from relationships and activities: Study 2

Variable	Personal growth (at Time 2)				Disengagement from other relationships and activities (at Time 2)			
	B	SEB	β	R ²	B	SEB	β	R ²
Relationship length	−0.01	0.00	−0.17	0.38	−0.00	0.00	−0.03	0.37
Outcome at baseline	0.47	0.10	0.41***		0.43	0.07	0.47***	
Harmonious passion	0.34	0.12	0.23**		−0.28	0.10	−0.20**	
Obsessive passion	0.06	0.07	0.07		0.10	0.06	0.11	

Outcome at baseline represents “personal growth” at time 1 in the first regression analysis, and “Disengagement from other relationships and activities at Time 1 in the second regression. The four predictors were assessed at Time 1

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

passion was not significantly related to it ($\beta = 0.07$, $t [155] = 0.92$, $p = 0.36$; 95 % CI [−0.07, 0.19]). In addition, controlling for relationship length and baseline disengagement from activities and relationships, harmonious passion negatively predicted disengagement at Time 2 ($\beta = -0.20$, $t [155] = -2.84$, $p < 0.05$; 95 % CI [−0.52, −0.07]) whereas the positive contribution of obsessive passion was not significant ($\beta = 0.11$, $t [155] = 1.55$, $p = 0.12$; 95 % CI [−0.04, 0.25]).

Another set of regression analyses were carried out to determine whether personal growth and disengagement from activities and relationships at Time 1 could predict harmonious and obsessive passion at Time 2, while controlling for relationship length and passion levels at baseline. Controlling for relationship length and passion levels at baseline, personal growth at Time 1 was marginally related to harmonious passion at Time 2 ($\beta = 0.15$, $t [155] = 1.97$, $p < 0.10$; 95 % confidence intervals—CI [0.02, 0.25]), whereas disengagement from activities and relationships was not significantly related to it ($\beta = -0.09$, $t [155] = -1.34$, $p = 0.18$; 95 % CI [−0.18, 0.04]). In addition, controlling for relationship length and baseline obsessive passion, both personal growth at Time 1 ($\beta = 0.03$, $t [155] = 0.54$, $p < 0.05$; 95 % CI [−0.10, 0.17]) and disengagement from relationships and activities at Time 1 ($\beta = 0.04$, $t [155] = 0.61$, $p < 0.001$; 95 % CI [−0.10, 0.14]) did not predict obsessive passion at Time 2. It has to be noted that all analyses were re-conducted while entering where participants were recruited (i.e., via Facebook or via their university) as a covariate. The pattern of results remained unchanged.

The main purpose of Study 2 was to examine whether harmonious and obsessive passion could predict outcomes (i.e., personal growth and disengagement from activities and relationships) 6 months later while controlling for outcomes at baseline, or whether the reverse was true, that is whether outcomes at Time 1 could predict harmonious and obsessive passion at Time 2. Controlling for relationship length and outcomes at baseline, harmonious passion positively predicted personal growth at Time 2 and negatively predicted disengagement at Time 2. Meanwhile, obsessive passion at

Time 1 did not significantly predict outcomes at Time 2. Outcomes at Time 1 were not found to predict passion at Time 2, except for personal growth at Time 1 which marginally predicted harmonious passion at Time 2. Overall, these results suggest that passion better predicts outcomes 6 months later than the other way around. It is important to keep in mind one important limitation of Study 2 when considering these results, namely the relatively short time period between measurement points. The patterns of results that were observed need to be replicated with longer longitudinal designs before more conclusive interpretations can be made.

Study 3

In the two previous studies all measures were self-reported which could have led to common method bias as an explanation for the results. The main purpose of Study 3 was to replicate the results of these studies while ruling out self-report bias as an explanation for the observed findings by asking informants (participants’ close friends) to rate the positive and negative personal outcomes experienced by participants as a result of their romantic involvement. In line with the previous two studies, it was hypothesized that both harmonious and obsessive romantic passion would be positively related to personal growth as rated by participants’ close friends. We also hypothesized that harmonious and obsessive romantic passion would be respectively negatively and positively associated with disengagement from activities and relationships, as rated by participants’ close friends.

Method

Participants

Targets

Participants were 99 Canadians (81 women, 18 men) from the province of Quebec currently involved in a romantic

relationship. Mean age was 23.69 years ($SD = 4.63$ years) and 97 % of participants were French Canadian. The average relationship length was 3 years and 3 months ($SD = 3$ years). Regarding relationship status, 53 % of participants were living with their partner, 38 % were dating, and 8 % were married.

Targets' close friends

Participants' close friends were 131 Canadians (102 women, 28 men, one with unidentified gender) with whom they had been friends for an average of 11.59 years. Their mean age was 25.77 years and 96.9 % of them were French Canadian.

Procedure

Participants were recruited on Facebook through an advertisement targeting individuals currently involved in a romantic relationship. People interested were directed to an online survey website that contained the questionnaire. At the end of the questionnaire, they were asked to provide the names and email addresses of up to five close friends (excluding their romantic partner). Participants were informed that we were interested in contacting their close friends for their opinions on the characteristics of participants' romantic relationship.²

Instruments

Measures completed by participants

Demographic variables Participants completed a demographic information section that included questions on gender, age, mother tongue, relationship length, etc.

Harmonious and obsessive passion The Romantic Passion Scale (Ratelle et al. 2013) was again used. The Cronbach alphas of the harmonious and obsessive passion subscales were 0.86 and 0.73, respectively.

Measures completed by the informants

Demographic variables Participants' close friends completed a demographic information section that included questions on gender, age, mother tongue, nature of their relationship with the participant, etc.

Friends' report of participants' growth The same personal growth items were used again but they were adapted to capture friends' perceptions of participants' growth

($\alpha = 0.90$). A sample item is: "Being in a relationship with his/her current romantic partner has made my friend see life more positively."

Friends' report of participants' disengagement from relationships/activities The same items were used again but they were adapted to capture friends' perceptions of the extent to which participants have disengaged from their relationships and activities because of their romantic involvement ($\alpha = 0.87$). A sample item is: "Being in a relationship with his/her current romantic partner has made my friend stop doing activities that he/she used to really enjoy."

Results

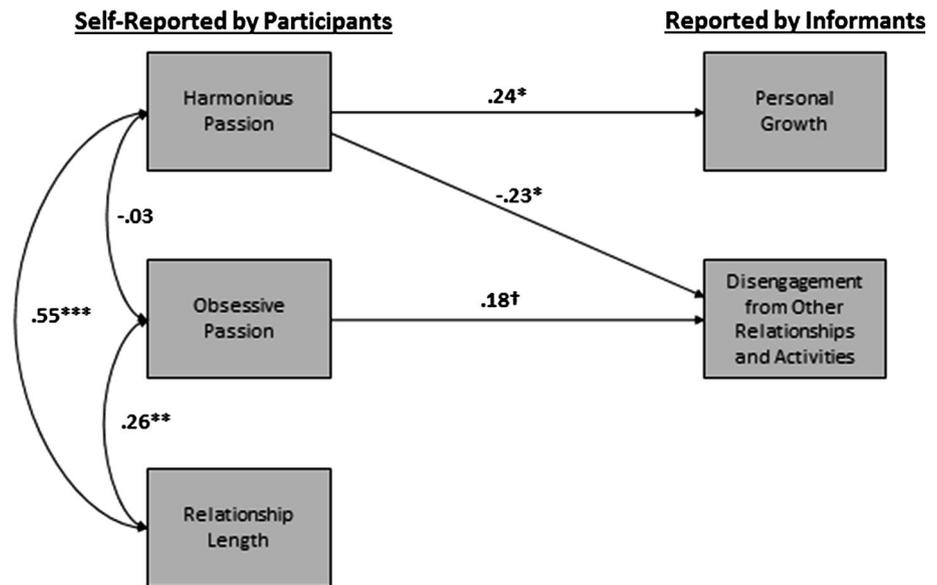
The means and standard deviations of the study variables are reported in Table 1. A structural equation modeling model was conducted on the raw data with Maximum Likelihood estimation. The model included three exogenous variables (self-reported harmonious passion, obsessive passion, and relationship length) and two endogenous variables (personal growth and disengagement from relationships/activities as perceived by participants' friends). Paths were specified between the three exogenous variables and each endogenous variable. Only three paths were found to be significant: the path from harmonious passion to personal growth and the paths from both types of passion to disengagement from relationships/activities outside the romantic relationship. The analyses were run again while omitting the non-significant paths. This model had an acceptable fit to the data: χ^2 ($df = 3$, $n = 99$) = 1.05, $p = 0.79$, NFI = 0.96, NNFI = 1.0, CFI = 1.0, GFI = 0.99, SRMR = 0.03, and RMSEA = 0.00 [0.00; 0.11]. As can be seen in Fig. 1, it was found that harmonious passion positively predicted personal growth ($\beta = 0.24$, $p < 0.05$) while negatively predicting disengagement from other relationships and activities ($\beta = -0.23$, $p < 0.05$). Obsessive passion was only found to marginally predict disengagement from relationships and activities ($\beta = 0.18$, $p < 0.10$).

Discussion

Results of Study 3 partially supported the hypotheses. Individuals' harmonious and obsessive passion were found to respectively negatively and positively predict friends' report of participants' disengagement from relationships and activities outside the romantic relationship. However, while harmonious passion positively predicted personal growth (as rated by friends), obsessive passion was not significantly related to it. Globally, the results of Study 3

² When two or more friends of a participant completed the report, scores were averaged across friends.

Fig. 1 Results of the structural equation modeling analyses of Study 3 *Note.* † $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, $n = 99$. Standardized path coefficients are presented



are important as they reveal that the “passion-to-outcomes” sequence obtained in the previous studies is not a product of participants’ tendencies to describe themselves in a consistent or desirable manner. Rather, these results show that personal growth and disengagement from relationships and activities outside the romantic relationship are evident to other people (at least to close friends). However, the results of this study must be seen in light of the small sample size and should therefore be considered as preliminary.

General discussion

The main purpose of the present research was to examine the role of harmonious and obsessive romantic passion in predicting personal changes resulting from being involved in a romantic relationship. It was hypothesized that harmonious and obsessive passion would both be positively associated with personal growth, but that they would respectively negatively and positively predict disengagement from relationships and activities outside the romantic relationship. In addition, it was expected that a similar pattern of results would be obtained whether the two outcomes were self-reported or observed by others. Overall, the results of the three studies provided support for these hypotheses. The findings of the present research lead to a number of implications.

On romantic passion

The results of the present research support the Dualistic Model of Passion as applied to romantic relationships

(Carbonneau and Vallerand 2013; Ratelle et al. 2013). Distinguishing between harmonious and obsessive romantic passion is important because it improves our understanding of experiences (both positive and negative) that take place within ongoing romantic relationships. The present findings have important implications for the Dualistic Model of Passion (Vallerand et al. 2003, Vallerand 2010) as they document the differential role of harmonious and obsessive passion in important personal outcomes. In line with past research, harmonious passion was found to promote personal growth and allow the individual to remain engaged in other spheres of life (i.e., friends, family, hobbies) outside the relationship. Obsessive passion was found to produce a more conflicted picture. More specifically, obsessive passion was found to be either positively related (Study 1) or unrelated (Studies 2 and 3) to personal growth while being either positively related (Studies 1 and 3) or unrelated (Study 2) to disengaging from other important relationships and activities because of romantic involvement. The implications of such findings are important given that the positive and negative personal outcomes resulting from one’s involvement with a romantic partner have been found to affect relationship satisfaction and the stability of the relationship (e.g., Bui et al. 1996). Thus, a better understanding of the positive and negative personal outcomes associated with romantic relationships could have important impacts on romantic partners.

The various benefits associated with harmonious passion prompt the question of whether it is possible to help individuals who have an obsessive passion become more harmonious toward their activity or relationship. The answer to this question could have important practical implications

for psychologists, counsellors, and other practitioners. As argued by Lafrenière et al. (2011), temporal stability of both harmonious and obsessive passion is moderately high, which suggests that there is room for change and fluctuation. Results of past research show that a harmonious passion is likely to develop if the process of internalization of the activity (or relationship) takes place in a social environment that promotes the individual's sense of autonomy (Mageau et al. 2009). One way to change an obsessive passion into a more harmonious passion would thus be to replace the controlled internalization process by the autonomous one. According to Vallerand (2012), one way to accomplish this would be to have the individual reflect on the autonomous reasons that make the relationship important for him/her, such as the positive feelings associated with it and the sense of choice in deciding to maintain commitment in this relationship. The individual could also be asked to identify and reflect upon the variety of ways through which the relationship is consonant with his/her intrinsic values (Kasser, 2002).

Implications for relationship research

The present results are in line with the self-expansion model (Aron and Aron 1986, Aron et al. 1991), which posits that including a romantic partner in one's self should result in personal growth. This is because the inclusion of a romantic partner in the self offers the opportunity to gain greater access to the partners' resources, skills, perspectives, and knowledge and, to some extent, to experience them as one's own. The resulting self-expansion allows individuals to enhance their potential efficacy in order to ultimately achieve their goals more easily. In addition, experiencing self-expansion within a relationship leads to a variety of positive outcomes, including enhanced relationship quality (Aron et al. 2000; Lewandowski and Aron 2004; Reissman et al. 1993) and increased relationship commitment (Agnew et al. 1998). Both harmonious and obsessive passion are posited to stem from an internalization of the partner into one's self (see Ratelle et al. 2013) and, in line with self-expansion theory, were thus expected to be associated with personal growth. The present research supported these hypotheses.

Results of the present research nevertheless suggest that the internalization of the partner in one's self can come at a price. More specifically, for individuals with an obsessive passion, the inclusion of a partner in their self is accompanied by a disengagement from other activities and relationships. If adding new elements to the self (through the internalization of one's partner) means letting go of other important elements that used to define the self (such as friends, family and hobbies), then the costs cancel out much of the gains. Meanwhile, for individuals with a

harmonious passion, incorporating new aspects into the self does not involve rejecting other aspects that define the self. For those individuals who manage to internalize new elements associated with the partner without losing those already held by the self, the result clearly is an enrichment of the self.

The present results are congruent with the idea that the self-concept is especially susceptible to change as individuals encounter life transitions that bring about new roles and commitments (e.g., Demo 1992; Skaff and Pearlman 1992). The concept of role engulfment, for example, has been described as a process through which a person's identity becomes based on one specific role, superseding all other roles the person assumes (Adler and Adler 1991; Schur 1971). Such a process sets the stage for role abandonment, that is, the disassociation and detachment from other roles, goals, and priorities following role engulfment (Adler and Adler 1991). This is what appears to happen to people with an obsessive passion: they immerse themselves entirely in their role as a romantic partner (role engulfment) while simultaneously putting aside other roles and activities that used to be important for them and to define them (role abandonment).

The present findings have implications for research on the personal outcomes that individuals experience in romantic relationships. First, the results of these three studies shed light on an important factor that allows for the prediction of relationship consequences, namely one's type of romantic passion. Specifically, while people with a harmonious romantic passion maintain friendships, interests, and activities outside the romantic relationship, this is not the case for people with an obsessive passion. Past research has documented the detrimental effects of distancing oneself from close family and friends for the sake of one's romantic relationship and these include increased loneliness (Weiss, 1974) and lowered support from people other than the romantic partner (Cramer, 1990; Sheldon and West 1989). Maintaining close ties with friends and family may help individuals negotiate the ups and downs of romantic relationships as these people can offer valuable relationship advice and provide support when couple conflict arises (Zimmer-Gembeck, 2002). Members of the social network can even help individuals feel more satisfied with and committed to their romantic partners (Bryant and Conger 1999). For example, they can do so by validating the relationship (e.g., commenting about how well matched the partners are; Berger, 1988) and by nurturing the couple's identity by inviting the two partners to social events as a couple (Lewis, 1973). In addition, individuals who keep a good social network when involved in a romantic relationship tend to meet various developmental challenges (e.g., marriage, child bearing, widowhood, etc.) with better outcomes (e.g., Connidis and Davies 1990; Dykstra 1995;

Magnusson et al. 1985). In sum, individuals who withdraw from their friends and relatives when they are in a romantic relationship would appear to cut themselves off from people who could help them maintain a strong and thriving romantic relationship.

In the present series of studies, harmonious passion was systematically found to be positively associated with personal growth, which was not the case for obsessive passion. As proposed by the self-expansion model (Aron and Aron 1986, 1996, 1997, 2004, 1991), romantic partners can become included in the self but so can close friends and family. It thus appears that even though obsessively passionate individuals may experience some self-growth from their romantic relationship, they are meanwhile reducing their access to the resources, perspectives, and characteristics of their close friends and family. Conversely, harmoniously passionate individuals can experience more personal growth because they do not over focus on their romantic partner, but rather remain actively involved with their close family and friends.

Our results suggest that individuals with a harmonious romantic passion may have found ways to allow their romantic relationship to coexist with the other important domains of their lives. This would be consistent with the network-embeddedness conception (see Thoits, 1983), which incorporates the possibility of interdependence among multiple identities or roles. As Thoits (1983) puts it: “Where role partners overlap in the same person or persons, scarce time and energy can be spent sustaining two or more identities simultaneously (thus reducing the possibility of role strain as well).” In line with Thoits (1983), we posit that individuals with a harmonious passion may be more prone to integrating their romantic partner into their existing social networks. For example, they may be more likely to set up “couple dates,” which would allow them to nurture both their romantic relationship and their friendships at the same time. Whether individuals with a harmonious passion manage to compensate for the reduction of available time for friends and family by seeing these people in the company of the romantic partner would be an intriguing research avenue to further explore (Kalmijn, 2003; Thoits, 1983). It would also be interesting to examine whether people with a predominant harmonious passion are more likely to initiate their partners into their favorite hobbies – a clever strategy that would allow one to continue practicing one’s favorite activities while spending quality time with the partner. In future research, it would be interesting to examine whether obsessive passion predicts more time spent with partner and less time spent with friends and family, whereas harmonious passion predicts more time spent with both the partner and one’s friends and family, as people with the latter type of passion include their partner in their existing social network. Clearly, more

research is needed to better understand the strategies that people with a harmonious passion use to reorganize their lives as they become involved in a romantic relationship. More research along these lines would be valuable as it could also help further understand why individuals with a harmonious (vs. obsessive) passion experience more personal growth within their relationship.

The findings of the present research revealed that the personal changes (i.e., personal growth and social disengagement) experienced by people as a result of their romantic involvement are evident to others – at least to close friends. This was uncovered in Study 3 in which informants reported how much they perceived their friend to have grown since being involved in their romantic relationship and to what extent their friend had disengaged from other spheres of their life. It is worth mentioning that almost the same pattern of results between the two types of passion and personal outcomes was obtained whether the outcomes were self-reported or peer-reported. Thus, the results of Study 3 suggest that the positive and negative personal outcomes derived from relationships are not simply a by-product of one’s perceptual system, but can also be observed by others. In future research, it would be interesting to examine whether similar patterns of results would be obtained if informants were also asked to report on their perceptions of participants’ harmonious and obsessive romantic passion.

Limitations

Some limitations of the present research need to be mentioned. First, this research primarily relied on correlational evidence that precludes inferences about causality. Experimental design is needed to conclusively establish a causal relationship between these variables. Second, measures were almost exclusively based on participants’ self-reports. Study 3 was the exception as informants’ reports were used. Nevertheless, future research should try to reproduce the present findings using more objective measures. Third, the samples of the three studies were modest in size, and thus replication of the findings in larger samples is needed before definitive conclusions can be drawn. Fourth, the homogeneity of our samples represents an important limitation to our series of studies. Participants were mostly young adults involved in relationships of short length. Even though relationship length was added as a covariate and was not found to influence the results, future research should investigate whether romantic passion has similar influences at different stages of life. For instance, in Study 3, it was apparent that a large covariance existed between relationship length and harmonious romantic passion (more so than between relationship length and obsessive passion). This result is consistent with past research showing that

harmonious passion predicts the likelihood of still being involved with the same partner 3 months later (Ratelle et al. 2013, Study 3), but more research is needed in order to better understand why individuals with a harmonious passion have longer lasting relationships. One hypothesis is that individuals with a harmonious passion manage relationship conflict more effectively (see Carbonneau and Vallerand 2013), which is key to healthy and lasting relationships. It is also possible that under relationship stress, individuals with a harmonious passion are better able to use positive accommodation strategies (reacting with voice and loyalty responses; Rusbult 1993), which are typically more effective relationship maintenance strategies than negative strategies (such as reacting with exit and neglect responses). These hypotheses deserve further investigation. Future research should also try to replicate the present findings with participants of more varied ages and ethnicities.

Another major limitation of the present studies is the over-representation of female participants. Past research from the Dualistic Model of Passion has found that the patterns of relationships between the two types of passion and outcomes are typically unaffected by gender and age (see Marsh et al. 2013). The present results should nevertheless be replicated with samples of participants that include more men before definitive conclusions can be reached. Finally, another limitation of the present research is the reliance on participants' retrospective accounts of how they have changed as a result of their romantic involvement. These perceptions are possibly biased as individuals might evaluate the changes that took place in the past in light of what they are experiencing in the present. For example, individuals who are very happy in their relationship may overestimate the positive transformations that they have experienced as a result of their romantic involvement. In an attempt to minimize this limitation, relationship quality and depression were controlled for in Study 1 and informant reports were used in Study 3. Nevertheless, in the future, researchers should use longitudinal designs; this would allow them to predict long-term changes that take place in relationships over time.

Conclusion

In sum, the present research represents an initial attempt to document the role of harmonious and obsessive romantic passion in changes resulting from romantic relationships. Our results suggest that (1) harmonious and obsessive romantic passion are important predictors of changes that take place when people become involved in a romantic relationship, (2) harmonious and obsessive passion predict these changes more so than the reverse, and (3) the pattern

of results found between the two types of passion and self-reported changes is partially reproduced when the personal outcomes are reported by a third party.

Do people change when involved in a romantic relationship? The results of this research suggest that they do and that the nature and extent of these changes may be predicted by one's predominant type of romantic passion. The present research thus provides new insights into the dynamic processes leading individuals who are in a romantic relationship to change – for better or for worse.

Compliance with ethical standards

Conflict of interest The authors have no conflict of interest to declare.

Informed consent Informed consent was obtained from all participants. This research was supported by a grant from the Fonds de Recherche du Québec – Société et culture (FRQSC) to the second author.

Appendix: Items used to assess “personal growth” and “disengagement from other relationships and activities”

Being in a relationship with my partner has...

1. ...made me see life more positively.
2. ...made me a better person.
3. ...made me see my life's purpose more clearly.
4. ...made me stop doing activities that I used to really enjoy.
5. ...made me neglect my relationships with my friends.
6. ...made me neglect my relationships with my family.
7. ...given me more hope for the future.
8. ...brought out the best in me.
9. ...made me abandon hobbies that used to be important to me.
10. ...helped me develop qualities that were hidden in me.

“Personal Growth” items: 1-2-3-7-8-10.

“Disengagement from Other Relationships and Activities” items: 4-5-6-9.

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