



# Moving Positive Psychology Forward: Building on the Psychology of Passion Using van Zyl et al.'s Critical Analysis of the Field

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## Abstract

In their recent systematic review, van Zyl et al. (2023) summarized contemporary critiques formulated toward the field of positive psychology. Within this research field, considerable differences exist with regard to the rigor of the methodological strategies used in each domain or subfield. These authors have identified six “broad critiques/criticisms” or overarching themes: “(a) positive psychology lacks proper theorizing and conceptual thinking; (b) the measurement of positive psychological constructs and the research methodologies are problematic; (c) positive psychology is a pseudoscience that lacks empirical evidence and shows poor replicability; (d) positive psychology lacks novelty and self-isolates from mainstream and general psychology; (e) positive psychology is a decontextualized neo-liberalist ideology that caused harm; and (f) positive psychology is a capitalistic venture” (van Zyl et al., 2023, p. 7). In this article, we use these six themes to allow us to identify some of the strengths and weaknesses of the Dualistic Model of Passion (Vallerand, 2015), thereby contributing to making recommendations as to how to improve the subfield of passion research. We believe that applying this systematic and critical analysis to other subfields of positive psychology should ultimately contribute to improving the future development of positive psychology as a whole.

**Keywords** Passion · Criticisms · Replicability · Positive psychology · Culture

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## 1 Introduction

Positive psychology emerged around 25 years ago from a desire to investigate what constitutes “a life worth living for” (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Eminent psychology researchers founded this new field of psychology in response to a strong imbalance toward clinical issues and concepts in mainstream psychology. Thus, to make things more even, positive psychology has focused on concepts to be found on the positive side of psychology, such as well-being, strengths and virtues, optimal human functioning, meaning, and excellence (Donaldson et al., 2020). In the last decades, a plethora of studies allowed scientific researchers to better understand how individuals and communities can thrive and flourish. Overall, research on positive psychology has made several contributions to our comprehension of the human condition and subjective well-being (Lomas et al., 2021). However, with the rise of positive psychology quickly came skepticism and criticisms. Provoking many commentaries, Lazarus (2003) went as far as to suggest that positive psychology was just another fad and would disappear over time. Yet, 25 years later, Lazarus’ prediction has not come to bear. In the scientific community, positive psychology remains a vibrant area of research. Further, the popular interest has remained strong, with numerous popular scientific self-help books routinely becoming bestsellers.

The above suggests that positive psychology is indeed here to stay. Thus, ensuring that the field of positive psychology progresses on solid ground represents an important endeavor. Recently, van Zyl et al. (2023) have formulated a systematic review of current critiques and criticisms of positive psychology leading to a number of themes or “broad critiques/criticisms”. Such a systematic analysis of positive psychology’s limitations is a key step in formulating ways as to how to improve the field. Using the Dualistic Model of Passion (DMP; Vallerand, 2015; Vallerand et al., 2003) as a case example, the goal of this paper is to show how positive psychology researchers can use the critiques summarized by van Zyl et al. (2023) to systematically improve the current state of their subfield in light of these criticisms. We first briefly present the DMP and then, using each of the six overarching themes identified by van Zyl et al. (2023), we discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the DMP, highlighting where and how passion research can be improved in the future. There is considerable variability with respect to the quality of research conducted in different subfields of positive psychology. Thus, we believe researchers should resist the urge to throw the baby out with the bathwater. Rather, we encourage scientists to use the themes outlined by van Zyl et al. (2023) as a critical and systematic framework to evaluate and improve the quality of research conducted within each subfield of positive psychology.

## 2 Laying the Groundwork: The Dualistic Model of Passion

Prior to effectively assessing the performance of the DMP in light of each overarching theme, it is necessary to briefly introduce the model and associated scientific literature. This section thus lays the groundwork for this systematic evaluation. Passion is often portrayed in the media as one of the keys to happiness and success in many

areas such as work, sport, music, arts, relationships, and more. As the famous modern dancer and choreographer Martha Graham once said: “*Great dancers are not great because of their technique, they are great because of their passion.*” According to the DMP, passion is a form of engagement in an activity that one loves, or at least strongly likes, that is perceived as meaningful, that defines oneself, and in which one invests a significant amount of time and energy. In accordance with Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2017), the DMP is grounded in an organismic approach to self-growth (Vallerand, 2015). Across their lives, humans have a fundamental tendency toward self-growth. Individuals are active agents in their own lives, and their growth occurs within their environment. Notably, passionate activities can play an essential role in this process, becoming a central feature of one’s identity. Most individuals are passionate about an activity, which can have a number of effects on their lives. Indeed, early research on passion showed that around 84% of people are passionate (Study 1: Vallerand et al., 2003).

Although passion is critical to resilience, self-growth, and well-being, and can help one live a fulfilling life, it can also have some downsides (e.g., burnout, anxiety; Vallerand, 2015). To explain how passion can have adaptive and maladaptive effects, the DMP proposes the existence of two types of passion that can be either harmonious or obsessive. The two types of passion involve distinct internalizing processes and predict distinct outcomes (Vallerand, 2015). Harmonious passion results from an autonomous internalization of the passionate activity in one’s identity (Vallerand, 1997; Vallerand et al., 2003). With harmonious passion, individuals engage in their activity freely, without external contingencies, and experience positive emotions both during and after activity engagement. Conversely, obsessive passion results from a controlled internalization of the beloved activity in one’s identity. It is central to a contingent form of self-esteem and predicts ego involvement related to their activity. Because the activity that one loves controls them, individuals may experience negative emotions such as guilt and shame when they cannot engage in their activity or following activity engagement because they feel that they should have invested their time in other spheres of their lives (Vallerand et al., 2003).

Harmonious passion relates to positive outcomes such as subjective well-being, positive emotions, flow and attention, thriving relationships, and optimal functioning in society (Chénard-Poirier et al., 2023; Vallerand, 2013). Conversely, obsessive passion relates to deleterious consequences such as burnout, anxiety and depression, suboptimal decision-making, and dysfunctional relationships (Bonneville-Roussy & Vallerand, 2020; Marsh et al., 2013; Philippe et al., 2010; St-Cyr et al., 2023; Vallerand, 2015). Moreover, harmonious passion fosters flexible engagement in the activity, whereas obsessive passion fosters rigid engagement with an uncontrollable urge to partake in the beloved activity, taking a toll on one’s other spheres of life (Vallerand et al., 2023). Of course, everything is not black or white. Obsessive passion can at times be positively associated with positive emotions and well-being, though much less so than harmonious passion (Vallerand, 2015). Obsessive passion among entrepreneurs may also facilitate opportunity for recognition and performance (Tu et al., 2023). Relatedly, extant studies suggest that with obsessive passion, people tend to perform at a high level and may experience relatively high levels of psychological adjustment in environments that foster psychological insecurity (Amiot et al.,

2006; Bélanger et al., 2013). Therefore, the DMP does address “the positive and the negative” in positive psychology on two counts. First, by proposing that passion is not invariably good, the DMP addresses the duality of passion, whereby adaptive or maladaptive outcomes are experienced depending on the type of passion (harmonious or obsessive). Second, the DMP brings additional nuances regarding the outcomes that obsessive passion engenders. Whereas outcomes are typically lower in quality than those originating from harmonious passion, obsessive passion may, at times, lead to highly adaptive outcomes as well as mentioned above. More research on that front is encouraged.

### 3 The Six Overarching Themes Identified by van Zyl et al. (2023)

Positive psychology has experienced what may be referenced as three “waves” of development in response to previous criticisms of the field (Lomas et al., 2021; Wissing, 2022). At first (1998–2010), positive psychology overwhelmingly focused on “positive” phenomena (e.g., emotions, behaviors). The second wave (2010–2015) brought more nuance to the simplistic duality of the positive versus the negative, as well as a better appreciation of the adaptive nature of negative phenomena (e.g., boredom may facilitate creativity; Lomas et al., 2021). The (emerging) third wave (post-2015) embraces greater complexity by moving beyond the individual as the focus of inquiry to include context, culture, and systems, as well as more diverse research methodologies.

The recent systematic literature review conducted by van Zyl et al. (2023) aimed to identify the current criticisms to facilitate the growth of the science of positive psychology during the emerging third wave. This research team identified 117 contemporary criticisms or critiques that were classified into 21 categories and, ultimately, integrated into six overarching themes or “broad criticisms/critiques”. These themes suggest that positive psychology “(a) lacked proper theorizing and conceptual thinking; (b) was problematic as far as its measurement and methodologies were concerned; (c) was seen as a pseudoscience that lacked evidence and had poor replication; (d) lacked novelty and self-isolated from mainstream psychology; (e) was a decontextualized neo-liberalist ideology that caused harm; and (f) was a capitalistic venture” (van Zyl et al., 2023, p. 7). With the findings from their literature review, the authors wished to establish a common basis for reflections on how researchers can improve the field of positive psychology. Using the DMP, below we show how this may be the case with respect to the field of positive psychology and especially passion.

#### 3.1 On the Lack of Proper Theorizing and Conceptual Thinking

The first theme that van Zyl et al. (2023) identified from the data is that positive psychology lacks proper theorizing and conceptual thinking. As is the case with each of the six themes, this overarching criticism includes several specific criticisms regarding theorizing and conceptual thinking. For example, van Zyl et al. (2023)

report critiques implying that constructs such as virtues are poorly defined and that inconsistencies exist in the construction of concepts and theories. According to the criticisms highlighted by van Zyl et al. (2023), positive psychology creates an artificial divide between “positive” and “negative” experiences. This would falsely imply that emotions and behaviors should be classified as either positive or negative, and that both cannot coexist. In the psychology of passion, the DMP states that passion is not inherently positive or negative, but that adaptive or maladaptive outcomes may occur depending on the type of passion. This clear conceptualization of passion allows researchers to state specific hypotheses on the relative effects of the two types of passion on corresponding outcomes. A plethora of studies suggests that harmonious passion relates to well-being and positive outcomes, whereas obsessive passion can have detrimental consequences on various spheres of well-being, such as psychological, physical, and relational well-being (Curran et al., 2015; Vallerand et al., 2023). However, as mentioned above, some studies suggest that in some highly competitive contexts, obsessive passion can also be associated with adaptive outcomes (Amiot et al., 2006; Bélanger et al., 2013; Tu et al., 2023). To avoid classifying harmonious and obsessive passions as positive or negative, it is important to continue to examine in which contexts obsessive passion may be beneficial and to keep in mind that it should not be artificially categorized as a negative construct.

It is true that some positive psychology constructs have been poorly designed, especially initially (see van Zyl et al., 2023). However, despite some gaps, several constructs *are* well-defined. For instance, positive emotions (Fredrickson, 2001), the psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2017), and self-compassion (Neff, 2023) are all constructs that have been properly defined in line with their respective theories of Broaden-and-Build, Self-Determination, and Self-Compassion. In the case of passion, the DMP (Vallerand, 2015; Vallerand et al., 2003) provides a clear conceptualization of passion as well as its proposed antecedents and outcomes. To be considered a passion, four specific, but subjective criteria must be fulfilled. Passion is a strong inclination toward an activity (a) one loves or at least strongly likes; (b) finds important; and (c) invests time and energy in it. Finally, this meaningful activity also (d) defines oneself; it is part of one’s identity. One could say, “I don’t just play music. I’m a *musician!*” As described earlier, the DMP further posits that there are two types of passion: harmonious passion and obsessive passion. These two types of passion characterize the diverse ways we engage in our meaningful activity and can be present to different degrees in our identity (Schellenberg et al., 2019; Vallerand, 2015).

Notwithstanding these clear definitions, it is important to recognize that some inconsistencies exist in the construction of concepts and theories and that positive psychology may suffer from the jingle-jangle fallacy. The criticisms reviewed by van Zyl et al. (2023) suggest that some words are used interchangeably to reflect different psychological constructs such as happiness and well-being. On the contrary, different words may be used to reflect the same construct, like pleasure and positive affect that are often used interchangeably. With respect to passion, in addition to the Passion Scale that assesses harmonious and obsessive passion, some unidimensional measures of passion exist (Cardon, 2008; Sigmundsson et al., 2020). Furthermore, some theories posit that the construct of grit includes both passion and persistence

(Duckworth et al., 2007), whereas the DMP posits that passion and persistence are different constructs. Empirical studies have recently examined the differences between passion and grit, notably in university students and entrepreneurs (see Vallerand et al., 2023; Verner-Filion et al., 2020). Additional research along those lines is needed to better understand the differences and similarities between the underlying constructs that are currently referred to as passion.

### 3.2 On Issues with Measurement and Methodology

The second theme that van Zyl et al. (2023) identified was that there are issues with respect to operationalizing and measuring positive psychological constructs. As discussed above on the jingle-jangle fallacy, many measures are developed to assess the same psychological constructs (e.g., post-traumatic growth). Further, some show poor psychometric properties (low validity and reliability). Among the severe flaws in methodologies mentioned in critiques reviewed by van Zyl et al. (2023) is an overreliance on quantitative research designs and self-reports, poor research designs including cross-sectional and correlational analyses, and a failure to employ robust research designs such as the experimental protocol.

Research on passion is guilty of some of the limitations raised above. For instance, research has mainly used a self-report measure, the Passion Scale (Vallerand et al., 2003), to measure harmonious and obsessive passion. The validity of the Passion Scale has been established across many studies conducted over a 2-year period. Since the publication of the 2003 seminal paper, the Passion Scale has been slightly revised to improve its psychometric properties (Vallerand, 2010). Such changes were mainly conducted to remove weaker items in the subscales. This has led to the two 6-item subscales version of the scale currently in use (Marsh et al., 2013; Vallerand, 2010). To date, over 20 studies confirmed the bi-factorial structure of the Passion Scale using either exploratory or confirmatory factor analyses, thereby supporting its validity, in addition to its reliability, equivalence, and invariance across age, gender, cultures, language, and activities (Marsh et al., 2013; see Vallerand & Rahimi, 2022). Using such a valid and reliable instrument has led to replicable scientific results across a variety of settings, such as work (Vallerand & Houliort, 2019), education (Vallerand et al., 2023), and sports (Vallerand & Verner-Filion, 2020) and an overall solid foundation of the science of passion (Vallerand, 2015). Nevertheless, we encourage scientists to develop other types of measure (e.g., informants and observers, interviews, psychobiography, etc.) to assess harmonious and obsessive passion. Such a strategy would provide important cross-generalization of findings in our field.

In support of the methodological criticisms reviewed by van Zyl et al. (2023), most positive psychology studies have used cross-sectional and correlational designs, precluding inferences of causality. These limitations are also applicable to passion research. Indeed, most studies in the passion literature have used cross-sectional designs and quantitative methodologies (see Curran et al., 2015; Vallerand, 2015). Nonetheless, it should be noted that some passion studies have used longitudinal approaches (Vallerand et al., 2023) and sophisticated statistical models, such as

developmental trajectories (Tóth-Király et al., 2019), cross-lagged designs (Carbonneau et al., 2008), and diary studies (Mageau & Vallerand, 2007). Longitudinal studies allow researchers to examine antecedents of both types of passion, such as need-supportive or controlling environments (Mageau et al., 2009; Tóth-Király et al., 2019). Identifying antecedents that differ depending on the type of passion deepen our understanding of the DMP and provides support for the conceptualization of both types of passion. Furthermore, passion researchers have used experimental manipulations of passion, a gold standard among research methods that enable causality inferences (e.g., Bélanger et al., 2023; Lafrenière et al., 2013; Schellenberg et al., 2016). Importantly, inducing passion leads to the same effects on cognitive, affective, and behavioral outcomes as the harmonious passion and obsessive passion subscales of the Passion Scale (Vallerand, 2015). Taken together, longitudinal and experimental research designs lead to increased confidence in the directionality of the associations between the types of passions, their antecedents, and their possible outcomes. More research using such powerful designs is encouraged.

van Zyl et al.'s (2023) review also highlights that most studies in positive psychology have used self-report measures to assess outcomes. This represents a limitation that is strongly present in the passion literature. In line with recommendations from van Zyl and colleagues, we also encourage scientists to adopt a variety of measures to complement self-report measures, such as objective measures of performance (Vallerand et al., 2007, 2008), informant assessments (Carbonneau et al., 2016), and physiological measures (e.g., cardiovascular health; Vallerand et al., 2022). Such measures should contribute to bridging the gaps between positive psychology and mainstream psychology, as well as with other fields of studies (e.g., kinesiology, medicine, and the social sciences). Moreover, as is the case in the field of positive psychology, passion scholars predominantly rely on quantitative approaches. However, van Zyl et al. (2023) have correctly pointed out that the quantitative perspective does not fully capture the richness of the human experience. The use of a qualitative or mixed design is another area where passion research could benefit from a more multimodal research arsenal. Some researchers have used qualitative analyses to examine passion, notably among entrepreneurs, ultrarunners, and board chairs of national sports organizations (Hall, 2021; Zeimers et al., 2022). Although these studies provide support for the DMP, such qualitative analysis of passion remains limited. Clearly, we believe that it would be important for the field to include a greater diversity of methods, including participants from a broader variety of cultures, qualitative and mixed, as well as experimental designs, to develop the field forward.

### 3.3 On Positive Psychology as a Pseudoscience

The third theme highlights that positive psychology does not have adequate empirical evidence and shows poor replicability, notably in certain areas such as the role of positive emotions in dealing with cancer, as well as in intervention studies. In addition, van Zyl et al. (2023) report critiques implying that there is a confirmatory bias and that researchers are using questionable research practices such as *p*-hacking

(i.e., data manipulation until some significant results are obtained). According to these authors, positive psychology could allegedly be considered a pseudoscience. Again, we believe that subfields of positive psychology widely differ such that some theories mentioned in van Zyl et al.'s (2023) review have little scientific evidence to stand on, while others have accumulated vast amounts of empirical support (e.g., Self-Determination Theory, the DMP, the Broaden-and-Build Theory). This criticism is important and underscores that the field of positive psychology needs to be firmly anchored in strong science to move forward. Consequently, it is essential to evaluate the rigor of the empirical evidence that supports specific claims, subfields, or domains of positive psychology, and not to categorize the field as a whole as a pseudoscience. Importantly, there are valid concerns regarding the replication crisis in mainstream psychology, and many of these concerns also apply to other fields such as economics and medicine (Camerer et al., 2018; Hope et al., 2021; Maniadis et al., 2017; Open Science Collaboration, 2015; Prinz et al., 2011).

With respect to the field of passion, and especially that originating from the DMP, it would appear that scientific findings have replicated well. Specifically, empirical evidence has accumulated over thousands of published scientific publications, with most papers including several studies yielding replicable results. As mentioned earlier, within the DMP framework, passion has been studied in numerous and diverse contexts; researchers have examined passion for different sports, work, video gaming, music, studies, passion for causes and romantic passions, in dozens of cultures and languages worldwide (Vallerand & Rahimi, 2022). For example, the Passion Scale has been validated in at least 12 languages including Arabic, French, English, Spanish, Portuguese, and Iranian, and different cultures (Marsh et al., 2013; Hosein-inezhad & Rasouli, 2022; Salama-Younes & Hashim, 2018; Vallerand et al., 2003). Moreover, passion has been studied in a diversity of contexts, ranging from recreational to highly competitive environments including youth elite soccer players and expert musicians (Bonneville-Roussy et al., 2011; Verner-Filion & Vallerand, 2018). Of interest, such research has led to consistent results from meta-analysis (e.g., Curran et al., 2015).

In addition to the diversity of activities, languages and contexts, passion studies have included samples of different ages ranging from childhood to older adults from many countries. Of note, some studies included Canadian and Hungarian children and adolescents, allowing scientists to uncover the processes underlying the development of passion for an activity (Mageau et al., 2009; Tóth-Király et al., 2021; Verner-Filion & Vallerand, 2018). Other studies focused on passion among older adults in Egypt, France, and Canada (Philippe et al., 2009; Rousseau & Vallerand, 2008; Salama-Younes, 2018; Salama-Younes & Hashim, 2018). Across all these different settings, results from the DMP framework remain remarkably consistent, providing support for the robustness and replicability of the findings (for a meta-analysis, see Curran et al., 2015). Nonetheless, we acknowledge that the file drawer effect may exist with respect to passion. It is possible that studies grounded in the DMP did not replicate extant results and, therefore, were never published. Preregistration of future passion studies could provide additional information on this issue and is thus encouraged.



Furthermore, we agree with van Zyl et al.'s (2023) call for a stronger engagement with open science. The field of passion increasingly embraces open science practices, which will undoubtedly strengthen our confidence in the replicability of the field. As a single case in point, over the last two years, our lab (i.e., the Research Laboratory on Social Behavior at the Université du Québec à Montréal) has preregistered six research studies and uploaded data (and analysis scripts when available) on the Open Science Framework platform for most of these projects. Thus, even though progress on open science has been slow in the beginning, these practices are being adopted at an increasing pace and we strongly encourage their use.

### 3.4 On Novelty and Mainstream and General Psychology

The fourth theme that emerged in van Zyl et al.'s (2023) review suggests that positive psychology lacks novelty. For example, critics suggest that positive psychology proposes “no new models or paradigm”, that it has “questionable usefulness”, and that the “usefulness of the negative is ignored”. Critiques of positive psychology also include that this field brings nothing more than a rebranded cognitive behavioral therapy or humanistic psychology, that is not integrative, and that isolates itself from mainstream psychology. Here we feel that these critiques need to be nuanced somewhat. First, cognitive behavioral therapy has largely focused on the negative and not the positive aspects of human welfare. Second, while humanistic psychology has indeed focused on the positive, it has remained largely unempirical. Thus, the contribution of these two subfields to the scientific enterprise of positive psychology is not that straightforward. However, third, the fourth theme highlighted by van Zyl et al. has merits as it reminds the field that positive psychology represents a subfield of general psychology. Accordingly, it should be applied across social, developmental, educational, sports, clinical, and organizational psychology. Such a goal remains to be fully realized. In addition, because it is firmly anchored in solid scientific groundings, positive psychology has also the potential to contribute to other fields such as education, management, political sciences, public health, and many others (Donaldson et al., 2020). As we have alluded to in this paper, the field of passion, and especially the DMP, has contributed to these various areas. We are quick to point out that other theories such as Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2017) have also proven useful in many other subfields of psychology and other social sciences (Lemelin et al., 2023; Mageau et al., 2022; Manganelli et al., 2018; van Dorssen-Borg et al., 2021).

It should be noted that the DMP has been applied to several subfields of psychology. For instance, it has shown considerable usefulness in sports psychology, as evidence revealed that obsessive passion for sports is associated with higher risks of injuries and burnout than harmonious passion (Benoit-Piau et al., 2024; Lopes & Vallerand, 2020). Moreover, obsessive passion has provided insights into clinical psychology and the development of symptoms of behavioral addiction (Holding et al., 2021). Accordingly, some antecedents and consequences of passion could inform potential interventions. For instance, factors that remediate the lack of need satisfaction in one's life known to trigger obsessive passion for an activity such as

gambling may represent useful targets for interventions aiming to prevent addiction (Holding et al., 2021). Examining passion has also provided information about the ill-advised effects of adopting controlling behavior by parents, coaches, teachers, and work leaders on their children, students, workers, and athletes (see Vallerand, 2015). Such research shows how passion research (and the DMP) intertwines with several other subfields of psychology such as educational, developmental, and work psychology.

In relation to mainstream psychology, the DMP provides a nuanced picture of well-being given that it explains how some passions can become detrimental for some people's physical and mental health. Moreover, studies focusing on obsessive passion shed light on the usefulness of the "negative". Although obsessive passion may be considered the "dark side" of passion, in some circumstances, it may still be adaptive as it may be the only way through which individuals may experience some sense of satisfaction in their life (see Lalande et al., 2017). Research on the determinants of passion focused on the three psychological needs posited by Self-Determination Theory. These three needs are autonomy (i.e., feeling and acting with a sense of volition and agency), competence (i.e., feelings of efficacy, mastery, and achievement), and relatedness (i.e., feelings of belonging, respect, and connection with significant others; Ryan & Deci, 2017). The organismic approach to self-growth posits that individuals proactively seek opportunities to fulfill their psychological needs in their environment, including in their chosen activities (Vallerand, 2015). Empirical studies suggest that the development of obsessive passion is associated with unsatisfied needs outside the beloved activity (Holding et al., 2021; Lalande et al., 2017). As such, obsessive passion serves a compensatory function, allowing individuals to find with the passionate activity some need satisfaction. Although not as optimal as with harmonious passion, such need satisfaction may play some adaptive function in the short term (e.g., performance). However, in the long run, it may lead to addiction (Holding et al., 2021).

On a similar note, the role of passion for an activity in facing difficult life events has been the focus of a growing body of work. Harmonious passion has been proposed as a determinant of the resilience process helping individuals cope with difficult situations (Paquette et al., 2023; Rahimi et al., 2023; Vallerand & Paquette, 2023). Passion has been studied in contexts of adversity, notably among breast cancer survivors (Schellenberg et al., 2021a, 2021b), during the COVID-19 pandemic (Paquette et al., 2023), or following objective failure (Rahimi et al., 2023). As mentioned in van Zyl et al.'s review, additional research should be conducted on these and related issues. The DMP has proven to be a promising framework to deepen our understanding of the development of both psychopathology and resilience.

A critique that can be rightfully targeted at the DMP is that one may have the sense that a person is portrayed as either harmoniously or obsessively passionate toward an activity. Perceiving someone in that simplistic binary perspective can indeed appear reductionist. In fact, several studies have looked at passion in this light. However, Vallerand (Vallerand, 2015; Vallerand et al., 2003) made clear theoretically that harmonious and obsessive passions lie on two *different* continua. Thus, both need to be taken into account in order to have a better picture of the role of passion in one's life. Whereas most studies in the literature, include both

harmonious and obsessive passions in their statistical analyses, the two types of passion are typically pitted one against the other to see which one contributes the most to adaptive and maladaptive outcomes. More recently, researchers have looked at the *synergy* of harmonious and obsessive passion to see how they may combine in affecting human welfare. For instance, Schellenberg et al. (2021a, 2021b) have proposed a *quadripartite approach* where each type of passion for an activity can be each high or low, thereby leading to four combinations of passion: (a) high levels of harmonious passion and low levels of obsessive passion; (b) low levels of harmonious passion and high levels of obsessive passion; (c) high levels of harmonious and obsessive passion; and (d) low levels of harmonious and obsessive passion. Recent studies using the quadripartite approach have examined the unique and combined effects of both types of passion that one may experience. Of interest, it has been found that with respect to some outcomes, obsessive passion in the presence of high levels of harmonious passion does not always lead to maladaptive outcomes (Schellenberg et al., 2021a, 2021b). Thus, with the quadripartite approach, we steer away from the dichotomy of passion and provide a novel approach to study passion, leading to more refined predictions of outcomes (Schellenberg et al., 2019, 2023). We encourage scientists to heed the call of van Zyl and colleagues and to look for fresh perspectives on the contribution of our theories and models in positive psychology.

### 3.5 Positive Psychology as a Decontextualized Neo-Liberalist Ideology That Caused Harm

The fifth theme highlighted by van Zyl et al. (2023) is that positive psychology emphasizes individualism and individual responsibilities, while neglecting the broader context in which people develop. This neo-liberalist ideology then creates a fertile ground for cultural and gender biases to emerge and for the development of interventions that may cause harm. Some scholars also argue that because most studies were conducted in samples from WEIRD (i.e., White, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic; Hendriks et al., 2019) countries and theories were developed in Western societies, positive psychology researchers wrongly assume that their findings are universal. Their studies may overlook important cultural differences, for instance, the importance of communities and relationships, which are central to some Eastern populations.

This theme is also very important. Most studies in positive psychology, and this includes passion as well, have been conducted in North America with largely a white population. As such, this research practice limits research generalizations. Thus, it becomes paramount that research be conducted in as many cultures as possible to ensure the external validity of our findings. Although limited in number, some studies on the DMP have been conducted in various countries and cultures as was mentioned in a previous section. Such research must continue and expand. Importantly, as humanity faces several concurrent crises, including climate change, economic crises, and wars, we believe that it is essential that passion researchers examine how passions can impact communities. To this end, further research on how obsessive passion may lead to violent behaviors and harmonious passion to peaceful behaviors

(Bélanger et al., 2019, 2023; Gousse-Lessard et al., 2013) is important. Similarly, additional research is needed to deepen our understanding of how passion may affect radicalization and extremism (Kruglanski et al., 2021; Vallerand & Paquette, 2023). In this regard, developing interventions to promote harmonious passion would be an important next step for passion researchers. Doing so is key to promoting resilience (Paquette et al., 2023) and well-being. One novel suggestion proposed by the DMP (Vallerand, 2015) is to encourage individuals to add an activity that they love to their lives. Such a strategy leads other passions in the person's life to become less obsessive. In line with recommendations put forward by van Zyl et al. (2023), such a perspective on interventions should pay close attention to the idiographic nature of each person and his or her connection with the broader context and culture.

### 3.6 Positive Psychology as a Capitalistic Venture

Finally, the sixth and last theme that emerged from data reviewed by van Zyl et al. (2023) is that positive psychology is a capitalistic venture that profits from the impossible goal to be 100% happy. This criticism implies that as positive psychology encourages individualism in the search of happiness, it promotes a dream that is impossible to achieve unless people individually invest a significant amount of money to reach such a dream. As such, the problem is that the rich gets "richer" and wealth represents a way to reach well-being. This criticism has merits as it encourages scientists to keep in mind that the applications from our theories should remain practical and usable by most people. As discussed earlier, the subfield of passion provides a nuanced picture of mental health. The position taken here is that one way to reach happiness and well-being is to find a meaningful activity that resonates with one's identity and to engage in it regularly in a harmonious fashion without neglecting other aspects of one's life. Such activities vary widely as Vallerand et al. (2003) had identified over 100 different types of activities that people are passionate about (replicated in various cultures). Some may be expensive (e.g., skiing) but most are not (e.g., spending time with friends, reading, listening to music, etc.). Furthermore, engaging in one's passionate activity or even developing a passion for a new activity allows one to navigate difficult situations such as the COVID pandemic (Paquette et al., 2023).

One way to promote knowledge transfer to the general population is to embrace open science and good research practices. While the shift toward open science practices presents several challenges for psychology as a whole, we believe that positive psychology has a unique opportunity to distinguish itself in terms of rigor and transparency by fully embracing open science. Another critical endeavor to promote accessibility and representativeness is to diversify the samples that passion and positive psychology researchers use in their studies. Inclusion and diversity may illustrate that well-being is not only accessible through financial wealth. Relatedly, passion research is increasingly diversified as researchers conduct studies in many countries and cultures. We encourage these efforts toward inclusivity and believe they are essential to move the field forward. Finally, as George Miller (1969) suggested some 50 years ago, we need to "give psychology away" more than ever. Thus,

podcasts, interviews, and applied notes to different magazines and newspapers that rely on the science of positive psychology need to be disseminated widely. In this day and age of “fake news”, this is essential. In line with the above, evidence-based self-help books may contribute to “public pedagogy” by facilitating knowledge transfer from academia to popular culture and by enabling people to access resources and learn without extra intermediaries and barriers (McLean, 2013). In sum, we agree with the criticisms summarized by van Zyl et al. suggesting that we must pay attention to what we advocate in fostering positive psychology. However, one way to do so is to encourage people to find by themselves an activity that they love and will engage in harmoniously (see St-Cyr et al., 2024, for such a strategy). Such activities may vary as a function of culture and socio-economic status. However, research suggests that its effects on well-being should be positive irrespective of its nature to the extent that engagement in the activity remains largely harmonious.

#### **4 Moving Forward: Using a Systematic Approach to Evaluate Positive Psychology Research Fields**

In sum, the six overarching themes outlined by van Zyl et al.’s (2023) systematic review can form the basis for a critical and systematic evaluation of each domain, construct, or subfield of positive psychology. Researchers should consider (a) the theorizing and conceptual thinking; (b) the measurements, their psychometric properties, and the research designs that are used within their subfield; (c) the amount of empirical evidence that support their claims, the use of open science practices, and the extent to which extant studies replicate the main findings; (d) the novelty of the current research questions and the links with mainstream psychology; (e) the integration of contextual information, the focus on individualistic factors and the inclusion of diverse populations in studies; and (f) the capitalistic goals underlying research findings and the examination of possible unexpected negative outcomes in intervention studies. By acknowledging the modern criticisms of positive psychology, it becomes possible to use them as indicators to coordinate our efforts to move the field forward.

In this paper, we focused on the DMP as a case in point and have shown where we stand and how improvements can be made. As mentioned previously, this exercise can also be done with several positive psychology theories such as Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2017), the Broaden-and-Build Theory (Fredrickson, 2013), Mindset Theory (Yeager & Dweck, 2020), and Flow Theory (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Tse et al., 2020), to name but a few. These theories put forward well-defined psychological constructs that are measured with scales that show adequate psychometric properties and cumulate decades of empirical evidence. Researchers in these subfields of positive psychology frequently publish novel ideas using state-of-the-art methodological approaches. However, as van Zyl et al. (2023) remarked, not all positive psychology subfields share the same level of scientific rigor and attention should be paid to encouraging all areas of positive psychology to use the recommendations based on the themes outlined by van Zyl and colleagues. Finally, we also recognize the fact that the field would benefit from sounder theorizing across

the field and from more inclusion and diversity in terms of our methodology and participants. In line with this suggestion, many scholars have called for positive psychology researchers to move towards truly interdisciplinary approaches and diverse perspectives (Lomas et al., 2021; Wissing, 2022).

## 5 Conclusion

The themes identified by van Zyl et al. (2023) provide a blueprint of areas of improvement that could be effectively targeted by researchers to move positive psychology as a way forward to contribute to its emergence in this third wave. In this paper, we used the DMP as a case example as to how to use a critical, systematic framework to assess how well a given positive psychology subfield performs and how to improve it. The systematic evaluation proposed in this paper has shown that the DMP fares fairly well with regards to the modern criticisms of positive psychology. More importantly, we hope that our analysis has shown how passion research can be improved using the six overarching themes that emerged from van Zyl et al.'s review. Likewise, other subfields of positive psychology also evolved in the last decades to address some of the early criticisms of the field, while others still face some pervasive conceptual and methodological issues. In line with van Zyl et al.'s endeavor, we hope that the analysis proposed in this paper will contribute to improving the field of positive psychology more widely.

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**Data Availability** Further, because this is not an empirical paper, the ethical approval, informed consent, and data availability are not applicable.

## Declarations

**Conflict of Interests** The authors have no competing interests to declare that are relevant to the content of this article.

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