Too Much Growth: The Role of Self-Expansion Perceptions on Date Planning

by

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Abstract

The goal of this thesis is to examine whether perceptions of too much self-expansion affects

shared leisure experiences. I hypothesize that too much relational self-expansion will be

associated with a tendency to engage in less exciting and more familiar shared activities. In

Study 1, relational self-expansion was manipulated (i.e., too much, just enough, not enough) in

hypothetical couples and participants rated the types of dates (i.e., exciting or familiar) the

couple should engage in. In Study 2, participants reported their own relational self-expansion and

rated the excitement and familiarity of the date they planned. As predicted, when participants

read about someone experiencing too much self-expansion in their relationship, they selected

dates for the couple that were more exciting and less familiar (Study 1). However, these findings

did not extend to people's own relationships (Study 2). These findings highlight the importance

of self-expansion perceptions and integration for relationship maintenance behaviour.

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Humans are fundamentally motivated by the desire to expand the self (i.e., increase their knowledge, perspectives, resources, skills and identities) through experiences of growth, novelty and excitement (Aron & Aron, 1986, 1996). In the context of long-term romantic relationships, research has consistently found that engaging in exciting dates that promote self-expansion can help couples increase their relationship satisfaction (e.g., Aron et al., 2000; Aron et al., 2001; Muise et al., 2019; Harasymchuk et al., 2020). However, engaging in constant novel and exciting activities is not recommended. Once a person has gone through the process of expansion, they must integrate their new experiences and perspectives into their self-concept before they can continue to expand (Aron et al., 1996). However, it is unknown whether people can have too much growth. For instance, imagine Riley and her partner have just moved to a new city and are in the process of learning to navigate their new environment and adjust to all the changes. They are learning new things about each other and gaining a lot of knowledge about each other. With all this change Riley feels like there is too much growth and development in her relationship. Based on Riley's situation it is conceivable that she would prefer to do something familiar and comfortable with her partner (e.g., cuddling by the tv while watching their favorite movie) instead of something novel and exciting (e.g., trying a new leisure activity together). The research question guiding this research is: Can people have too much growth in their lives and in their relationships and if so, how does this affect their shared leisure experiences? More specifically, the goal of this thesis is to determine if people will be less likely to plan self-expanding (i.e., novel and exciting) dates when they read about a person experiencing too much growth (Study 1) and when they perceive too much growth in their own relationship (Study 2).

Self-Expansion Model

The self-expansion model posits that humans have a fundamental motivation for growth, to expand their sense of self to enhance their potential efficacy and ability to accomplish goals (Aron & Aron, 1986). Self-expansion can involve increases in a person's knowledge, perspectives, resources, skills and identities which all facilitate their ability to achieve goals (Aron & Aron, 1996). People seek to expand themselves because the process of rapid self-expanding has a positive effect, is physiologically arousing, pleasurable, and can be exhilarating (Aron & Aron, 1986; Strong & Aron, 2006).

Self-expansion is a cyclical process involving both an expansion phase and an integration phase (Aron & Aron, 1986). The expansion phase is driven by the motivation to increase novelty, complexity and stimulation, whereas the integration phase is driven by the motivation to reduce complexity to facilitate the process of incorporating newly acquired perceptions (from the expansion phase) into existing cognitive structures (Strong & Aron, 1996). Both phases are critical to the successful expansion of the self (Aron & Aron, 1986).

Self-expansion can occur through various experiences; one of the main ways people seek to expand is through close relationships. In the context of relationships, self-expansion occurs through the inclusion of the other in the self (Strong & Aron, 2006). This process involves the cognitive representations of each partner becoming interconnected resulting in each partners' resources, perspectives, and identities being accessible to the other (Mattingly & Lewandowski, 2014). As couples continue to include the other in the self, their cognitive representations become more intertwined and overlapping (Mattingly & Lewandowski, 2014). In a set of three studies researchers found that when participants rated traits for the self, a close other, and a non-close other followed by a surprise recognition task there was more source confusion between

traits rated for the self and close others (e.g., a trait rated for close other being recalled as a trait rated for the self) than for traits rated for the self and non-close others (Mashek et al., 2003). These findings suggest that the cognitive representations of the self and close other have become overlapped resulting in the confusion between traits rated for the self and close other.

Although people seek to expand through different types of close relationships (e.g., friendships) research has primarily focused on how self-expansion shapes the formation, maintenance and dissolution of romantic relationships. Falling in love is a rapid form of self-expansion that occurs through self-disclosure, risk-taking, and the development of relationships (Aron, Paris, & Aron, 1995). In a set of two longitudinal studies, researchers found that falling in love affects various aspects of the self, including increases to self-concept diversity, self-efficacy and self-esteem. This research illustrates the inclusion of the other in the self, which is the process of self-concept change that occurs during the formation of romantic relationships (Aron et al., 1995).

When relationships begin, each partner engages in self-disclosure and risk-taking which results in positive emotionality and arousal (Aron & Aron, 1986). These positive feelings are then attributed to the partner contributing to higher levels of passionate love (Deloyski, 2007). However, as relationships develop there are fewer opportunities for self-expansion since both partners know each other well, which can result in boredom and reduced relationship satisfaction (Strong & Aron, 1996). Therefore, maintaining a high-quality romantic relationship is challenging as partners, on average, become less satisfied with increased relationship duration (Bradbury & Karney, 2004; Lorber, Erlanger, Heyman, & O'Leary, 2015; Mitnick, Heyman, & Smith Slep, 2009). Research has shown that reduced self-expansion in current relationships leads to increased interest in relationship alternatives and significantly contributes to the overall

variance in susceptibility to infidelity (Lewandowski & Ackerman, 2005; VanderDrift, Lewandowski, & Agnew, 2010). One way to maintain feelings of self-expansion in a long-term relationship is to engage in self-expanding activities with a romantic partner.

Self-Expanding Shared Activities

Self-expanding activities can be operationalized in various ways; for some researchers, excitement is a key component. Exciting can refer to anything that is both novel and arousing (Aron et al., 2001). Some key terms that have been used to describe exciting activities include adventurous, spontaneous, playful, exciting, passionate, sexual, and interesting (Coulter & Malouff, 2013). Some activities couples often view as exciting are skiing, hiking, and going to concerts (Reissman, Aron, & Bergen, 1993). Couples who engage in exciting activities together report increased relationship satisfaction suggesting that these exciting activities do result in self-expansion within the context of the relationship (Coulter & Malouff, 2013; Reissman, Aron, & Bergen, 1993). However, in the field of self-expansion research arousal is not always considered important for achieving expansion (Tomlinson, Hughes, Lewandowski, Aron, & Geyer, 2019). To assess the distinct effect of arousal on self-expansion, researchers conducted a series of four studies using both experimental and correlational designs (Tomlinson et al., 2019). They found that it was the self-expanding aspect (i.e., fun and interesting) but not the arousal aspect of an activity that resulted in positive relationship outcomes (Tomlinson et al., 2019). Other researchers argue that since arousal often co-occurs with novelty, it is also associated with the positive feelings that occur with rapid self-expansion and therefore should be kept as a component of self-expanding activities (Aron et al., 2001).

Based on the concept of flow, self-expanding activities include any activity that results in growth and skill attainment (Graham, 2008). The activities must be challenging, but within the

skill level of the individual to allow for new skills to be learned and to achieve individual growth (Graham, 2008). In the early stages of relationships, partners are constantly facing challenges that they must overcome through the development of new skills that help them to better relate to each other (Graham, 2008). This results in individual self-expansion within the context of the relationship (Graham, 2008). When relationships develop there are less inherent challenges so couples must challenge one another and engage in exciting activities together to continue to self-expand (Graham, 2008).

Benefits of Self-Expanding Activities for Relationships

One key area of focus for researchers has been on examining the benefits of engaging in exciting shared activities within the relationship. There is converging evidence through various methods (i.e., correlational, lab experimental, "homework" experimental, daily experience) that self-expanding exciting are beneficial to relationship functioning because they promote self-expansion in the relatonship. Several studies have found a positive association between couples' engagement in exciting activities and relationship satisfaction (Aron et al., 2000; Harasymchuk et al., 2020; O'Leary, Acevedo, Aron, Huddy, & Mashek, 2012). In both a newspaper survey and a door-to-door survey, there was a strong association between the amount of exciting activities couples engaged in and relationship satisfaction (Aron et al., 2000). Similarly, in a study of married couples, researchers found a strong correlation between feelings of being "very intensely in love" and engaging in novel and challenging activities (O'Leary, Acevedo, Aron, Huddy, & Mashek, 2012). Additionally, in a 3-week daily diary study, researchers found that on days where participants reported a greater likelihood of engaging in novel and exciting activities, they also reported higher relational self-expansion which in turn resulted in higher relationship satisfaction (Harasymchuk et al., 2020).

Researchers have also established a causal link between couples' joint participation in exciting activities and relationship satisfaction. In an experimental paradigm, a group of researchers manipulated task type (i.e., novel/arousing or mundane) to examine whether joint participation in a novel and arousing task would increase relationship satisfaction in couples (Aron et al., 2000). The couples who engaged in the novel and arousing activities had increased relationship quality compared to those who participated in the mundane activities (Aron et al., 2000). In another experimental design, researchers manipulated the challenge of an activity (i.e., low, medium, or high) and found that the more skilled a couple, the more of a relationship there was between challenge and relationship quality (Graham & Harf, 2015).

Through homework style experiments, researchers have been able to examine the effect of joint engagement in self-expanding activities on relationship satisfaction in more naturalistic settings. In one study, married couples were randomly assigned to engage in activities that were exciting, pleasant, or no activity (i.e., control group) for 1.5 hours for 10 weeks (Reissman, Aron, & Bergen, 1993). Couples who participated in the exciting activity condition had higher post-intervention relationship satisfaction compared to the no activity control group and the pleasant activities group (Reissman et al., 1993). Furthermore, there is evidence that the relational benefits that occur from joint participation in self-expanding activities in natural settings can last for several months (Coulter & Malouff, 2013). In a 4-week online intervention, participants in the excitement program had post-intervention increases in positive affect, relationship satisfaction and relationship excitement, compared to the wait-list controls (Coulter & Malouff, 2013). These benefits were still present four months later illustrating the potential long-term positive impact that couples' engagement in self-expanding activities can have on their relationships (Coulter & Malouff, 2013).

Additionally, couples' momentary experiences of relationship quality are affected by their engagement in self-expanding activities in their daily lives. In a daily experience study, couple members each completed measures of their daily self-expansion, sexual desire, and relationship satisfaction for 21 days (Muise et al., 2019). The researchers found that on days when participants reported greater than usual relational self-expansion, they also reported greater sexual desire and relationship satisfaction (Muise et al., 2019). Experience sampling studies provide a breadth of knowledge on how self-expanding activities impact couples on a daily basis by showing that momentary increases in relationship satisfaction occur when couples are engaging in self-expanding activities.

In conclusion, through various study designs and diverse methodologies, researchers have consistently found that when couples engage in activities that are exciting, they experience increased relationship satisfaction. Taken together, these studies provide support that couples can obtain relationship benefits from engaging in self-expanding activities in various settings, including controlled lab studies, naturalistic field studies, and in their daily experiences. Most of the research on self-expansion has focused on the benefits of the expansion process and people's innate desire for self-expansion. However, there are still questions that remain about whether people can have too much self-expansion in their lives and in their relationships and if so, how try to reduce self-expansion.

Self-Expanding Individual Activities

Although research has mainly focused on relational self-expansion, self-expansion can occur outside of the relationship (Mattingly & Lewandowski, 2013). In the non-relational context, activities that are perceived as novel and exciting (e.g., travelling or starting a new job) can be self-expanding (e.g., Aron & Aron, 1986; Mattingly & Lewandowski, 2013). In one set of

studies, participants who completed highly self-expanding activities exerted more physical and cognitive effort than those in the low self-expanding condition (Mattingly & Lewandowski, 2013). The results were explained as exemplifying the rewarding process of expansion (Mattingly & Lewandowski, 2013). When participants were in the high self-expansion condition, they were experiencing the rewarding sensation associated with the expansion process and therefore exhibited more effort (Mattingly & Lewandowski, 2013). This research suggests that self-expansion can occur outside of the relationship, however, there is still more research needed to determine whether non-relational self-expansion affects relationship maintenance behaviour.

Too Much Self-Expansion: The Role of Integration

Although people are fundamentally motivated to expand their sense of self, people do not constantly seek out excitement. For an exciting experience to expand one's sense of self, the experience must be incorporated into a persons' existing cognitive structures. For example, if someone takes a course but is not able to integrate the new knowledge into their cognitive structures, they will not expand from the experience (i.e., not gain new knowledge). The integration phase of the self-expansion model is the motivating process during which newly acquired experiences/perceptions are incorporated into existing cognitive structures. Although the integration stage involves a tendency to reduce external excitement and stimulation, it leads to more expansion in knowledge and competence. This is achieved through adding expanding experiences into the self-concept which expands the self.

The expansion phase and the integration phase of the self-expansion model are separate aspects of a cyclical process and therefore in a particular knowledge domain, a person will either be expanded and seeking change (i.e., expansion phase) or in the process of expansion and withdrawing from change (i.e., integration phase). When one phase is completed, the motivation shifts and the person returns to the other phase. For instance, if someone has just successfully

added new perspectives into their self-concept their motivation will shift towards seeking out new experiences to further expand their sense of self, whereas someone who has just gone through an expanding experience will now be motivated to reduce change in order to process the expanding experience internally.

The process of self-expansion is constantly occurring in multiple domains simultaneously. Thus, a person can be seeking out expansion in one domain and be in the process of integration in another domain concurrently. However, Aron & Aron (1986) argue that there is a total expansion capacity and that the total of all expanding experiences cannot exceed the individual's capacity for expansion and integration. Therefore, a person may not desire expansion in a particular domain (e.g., work-related) if they are in the process of integrating a current work experience or if they have reached their total expansion capacity. Essentially, when changes come too fast or there are too many, they cannot be integrated and become sources of pain rather than pleasure. This suggests that the same experience, for example, a promotion, may be seen as an opportunity for expansion or not depending on the persons' perceived ability to integrate it. An experience will not expand the self if it cannot be successfully integrated into existing cognitive structures.

In the context of close relationships, the process of including the other in the self involves adding new skills, attitudes, resources, perspectives and behaviours from the close other into one's own cognitive structures. Therefore, the process assumes that the expansion opportunities can be integrated into the self. The amount a partner can expand by incorporating the other into the self is restrained by the requirement to integrate the expansion into the self. For example, a person may not desire a relationship with someone who is too different from them if they feel they will be unable to successfully incorporate the aspects of the other into the self.

The process of expansion and integration is also important in long-term romantic relationships where many aspects of the other have already been incorporated into the self. In addition to incorporating the experiences of the other into the self, long-term couples also go through joint expanding experiences, such as getting married, having a baby and moving to a new city. Therefore, it is conceivable that if a couple is experiencing a lot of expanding experiences simultaneously, such as moving to a new city and learning to navigate a new environment, they may not seek out further expansion as they are in the process of integrating the current expanding experiences into their self-concept.

Individual Differences in Desire for Self-Expansion

Although everyone goes through both the process of expansion and integration, there are individual differences that affect the amount of self-expansion a person desires and their capacity to integrate it (Aron & Aron, 1986). One important individual difference is personal self-expansion. Personal self-expansion is the amount of novelty and increased understanding of known concepts that a person desires and seeks out (Gordon & Luo, 2010). People who have high trait personal self-expansion seek out novel and self-enhancing experiences more often than others and as a result may desire more growth in their relationships and their lives more generally (Gordon & Luo, 2010).

Based on the cyclical nature of the self-expansion process it is conceivable that too many simultaneous expansion opportunities may be negative. If a person perceives that there is too much expansion occurring simultaneously, then any other expansion opportunities may be impossible to integrate (since the person's maximum capacity for expansion has been met; Aron & Aron, 1986). Therefore, both trait differences and momentary factors likely affect self-expansion perceptions in romantic relationships.

Overview and Hypotheses

My goal was to examine whether perceptions of too much self-expansion affect the way people maintain their relationship through shared leisure experiences. That is, when people perceive there is too much self-expansion in their relationships and in their lives, do they seek restfulness and simplicity (i.e., integration and low growth) over complexity and excitement (i.e., expansion and high growth) during their leisure time with their partner? To assess this question, I conducted two studies. In Study 1, I examined the types of dates people planned for a hypothetical couple based on the amount of perceived self-expansion. To do so, I manipulated self-expansion (i.e., too much, just enough, not enough) in a description of a hypothetical romantic couple member and measured participants' ratings of various dates that were characterized by excitement or familiarity. The goal of Study 2 was to generalize my findings from Study 1 to people's own relationships. This was achieved by measuring the amount of self-expansion people experience in their relationship and assessing the qualities of the dates they planned for their relationship. In Study 2, I also examined whether individual differences in the desire for self-expansion affected the date qualities participants planned for their relationship.

Hypotheses

I predicted that when people read about a hypothetical person experiencing too much self-expansion (vs. just enough; Study 1) in their relationship, they would choose dates for the hypothetical couple to engage in that were less exciting (i.e., expanding) and more familiar. Furthermore, when people experienced too much self-expansion in their lives (Study 2), they would plan dates that were less exciting and more familiar.

Exploratory

I also explored whether people who read about a hypothetical person experiencing not enough self-expansion (vs. just enough; Study 1) in their relationship, would select dates that were more exciting (i.e., expanding) and less familiar for the hypothetical couple to engage in. This was also expected to be true when people are experiencing not enough self-expansion in their lives (Study 2).

Additionally, I explored whether self-expansion experiences outside of the relationship (i.e., without the partner) affected the types of dates people chose for a hypothetical couple (Study 1) and in their relationships (Study 2). The purpose of including this was to examine whether the findings generalized to self-expansion experiences without the partner.

I also explored whether the amount of familiarity and comfort someone was experiencing inside or outside their relationship affected the types of dates people planned in their relationship (Study 2). By examining familiarity and comfort, I could determine whether the amount of familiarity and comfort a person experienced affected the types of dates they planned for their partner. I expected inverse relations for familiarity (i.e., too much self-expansion, plan more familiar dates).

Study 1

In Study 1, I examined whether the amount of self-expansion (too much, just enough, not enough) inside (or outside) the relationship would affect the types of dates participants would choose for a hypothetical couple. I aimed to determine whether participants would select dates that were less exciting (i.e., self-expanding) and more familiar when the hypothetical person was experiencing too much self-expansion (vs just enough) inside their relationship. In this online study, participants were randomly assigned to read one of six vignettes about a hypothetical

intimate couple and then answered questions about the qualities of dates (i.e., exciting and familiar) they would suggest for this hypothetical couple to engage in the near future.

Method

Participants

A sample of at least 128 participants would have allowed me to detect a medium-sized effect (d = 0.30) with 80% power. The power analysis was conducted for a t-test between my independent variable (i.e., too much growth) and my dependent variable (i.e., excitement of the date planned). I overrecruited to account for possible exclusions. A total of 540 Mturkers participated (in exchange for $0.50), but 141 were excluded due to ineligibility (i.e., not in a romantic relationship for 2 months) and 10 were excluded due to poor data (i.e., failed both attention checks or both open-ended bot-checker questions)[1]. The final sample size was N= 389 (53% women, M_{age}= 38.05 years, SD_{age}= 11.28). The majority of participants were Caucasian (80.46%), followed by African American (9.51%), Asian (6.68%) and 2.85% were bi- or multi-ethnic/racial or self-identified as "other". The majority classified their relationship as married (50.64%). The remaining participants were seriously involved/exclusive (38.06%) or casually dating (11.3%). The average length of these relationships was approximately 8 years (M_{length} = 94.05 months, SD_{length}= 104.48, range 2 months – 50 years).

Materials and Procedure

Following registration for the study via MTurk, participants were sent the link to complete the survey hosted on Qualtrics. Participants were credited $0.50 for participating in the study. In the first part of the questionnaire, participants completed a demographic survey that included questions about their romantic relationship (e.g., relationship status, length of relationship) as well as other demographics (e.g., age, gender and ethnicity). After, participants were asked to read about another person's relationship. All scenarios were about a hypothetical

person named Riley reflecting on his/her relationship. Participants were randomly assigned to read one of the six vignettes. The vignettes were used to manipulate the perceived self-expansion (i.e., too much, just enough, not enough) the hypothetical couple member was experiencing inside their relationship. However, the context the self-expansion was occurring in (i.e., inside the relationship or outside of the relationship) was also manipulated to explore whether expansion outside the relationship also affected date planning. The hypothetical person's gender was counterbalanced (i.e., half of the participants read about Riley as a woman and half read about Riley as a man). The name Riley was chosen because it is one of the most common gender-neutral names. Given that I made no predictions for gender effects counterbalancing was used to control for the gender of the couple member. [2]

Experimental conditions

Participants were randomly assigned to read one of the 6 vignettes. The amount of self-expansion (too much, just enough, not enough) and the context of the self-expansion (inside the relationship, outside the relationship) were manipulated within the vignettes. The main goal of this study was to examine too much (vs. just enough) self-expansion inside the relationship, but other conditions were included for exploratory purposes. For the amount of self-expansion (too much, just enough, not enough) the vignettes were worded exactly the same, except for the last sentence that indicates the character's perceived level of self-expansion/growth (i.e., Riley is said to be experiencing either too much, just enough, or not enough growth and development). For the context of the self-expansion, the vignettes were worded the same; but, the source of the self-expansion differed (i.e., Riley feels there is too much growth and development *in her relationship* vs Riley feels like *she is* going through too much growth and development). For the context variable, all participants in the *relationship* context conditions read:

Riley and her/his partner have just moved to a new city and s/he feels like a lot is

changing. Riley and her/his partner have been exploring their neighbourhood and trying

to navigate this unfamiliar environment. They have been learning things about each other

and Riley feels like s/he is gaining a lot of knowledge about her/his partner. Riley

and her/his partner have been meeting new people and trying to make friends. S/he feels

like going through these experiences with her/his partner is changing her/his sense of self

and her/his perspectives have become varied from what they were before the move. In

general, Riley feels like there is **too much/ too little/just enough growth and**

development in her/his relationship.*"*

For the context variable, all participants in the *outside of the relationship* context conditions

read:

Riley and her/his partner have just moved to a new city and s/he feels like a lot is

changing. Riley has been exploring her/his neighbourhood and trying to navigate this unfamiliar

environment. S/he has been learning things through this experience and gaining a lot of

knowledge. Riley has been meeting new people and trying to make friends. S/he feels like the

people and the settings are so different than what s/he is used to, and this is making her/his feel

like her sense of self is changing and her/his perspectives have become varied from what they

were before the move. In general, Riley feels like there is **too much/ too little/ just enough**

growth and development in her/his life."

Dependent measures

Participants then rated to what extent they thought the hypothetical couple should engage

in dates that were exciting compared to familiar. In this paper the term excitement refers to

anything that is novel or arousing (i.e., self-expanding). Participants rated to what extent they

thought the hypothetical couple should engage in three sets of dates that were characterized by familiarity (1) to excitement (7). For example, participants rated whether they thought the hypothetical couple should develop an old skill (1) or learn a new skill (7).

Participants also completed five forced-choice date ratings where they chose between dates that were exciting (1) and dates that were familiar (2). The forced-choice date ratings included more specific date items than the continuous date quality ratings. Example items include cook a new meal or cook a meal they make often as well as watch a movie at home or go to the movies.

Results

Through my analyses, I examined whether the amount of self-expansion and the context of the self-expansion affected date quality ratings (i.e., excitement and familiarity). Prior to conducting the analyses, I cleaned the data and checked the assumptions were met.

Data Cleaning

Given that participants were randomly assigned to three main conditions, I screened the data separately for each of the three groups. I tested the data for outliers (both univariate and multivariate), normality, and heterogeneity of variance between groups. The assumption of normality was violated in some conditions, however since t-tests are robust to slight violations of normality, I chose to continue with the t-test. In cases where there was heterogeneity of variance between groups, the results are reported for homogeneity of variance not assumed. There was one outlier, but removing it did not affect the results, so it was kept in the analyses. I also filtered out participants who had poor data quality (N = 10). Participants were removed if they failed both attention checks (i.e., failed to pick a particular response) or if they failed the two open-ended bot-catcher questions (i.e., the open-ended responses were strange and not related to the question). Once the data was cleaned, I proceeded with the analyses.

Preliminary Analyses

Before conducting the main analyses, I assessed the internal consistency between the three continuous date quality ratings using Cronbach's alpha. The results suggested high internal consistency ($a = .90$), so I created a composite measure of the continuous date quality ratings by taking the average of the three scores. All t-test results are reported using this composite measure. Additionally, since gender was counterbalanced and no effects were predicted, I re-coded the conditions by amount of growth and context of the growth (excluding gender) to create six conditions (instead of 12).

Main Analyses

Hypothesis 1

The hypothesis that people who read about a hypothetical person experiencing too much self-expansion (vs just enough) in their relationship will suggest dates for the hypothetical couple that are *less* exciting (i.e., expanding) and *more* familiar was supported through an independent t-test. Participants who read about Riley experiencing too much growth in the relationship ($M = 2.81$, $SD = 1.90$) suggested that the couple engage in dates that were *less* exciting and *more* familiar compared to participants who read about Riley experiencing just enough growth in the relationship ($M = 4.85$, $SD = 1.56$), $t(130) = 6.74$, $p < .001$. T-tests run for each of the four hypotheses were two-tailed and conducted using Bonferroni adjusted alpha levels of .0125 per test (.05/4).

The chi-square test of independence used to analyze the relationship between the too much and just enough growth conditions for the forced-choice date ratings also supported the hypothesis. Overall, participants who read about Riley experiencing too much growth in the relationship were *more likely* than those who read about Riley experiencing just enough growth

in the relationship to suggest the couple engage in dates that were *less* exciting and *more* familiar (see Table 1).

Exploratory Analyses

Conversely, participants who read about Riley experiencing not enough growth in the relationship ($M = 5.62$, $SD = 1.18$) suggested the couple engage in dates that were *more* exciting and *less* familiar compared to participants who read about Riley experiencing just enough growth in the relationship ($M = 4.85$, $SD = 1.56$), $t(120) = 3.168$, $p = .002$.

The chi-square test of independence used to analyze the relationship between the not enough and just enough growth conditions for the forced-choice date ratings also supported the hypothesis. Participants who read about Riley experiencing not enough growth in the relationship were *more likely* than those who read about Riley experiencing just enough growth in the relationship to suggest the couple engage in dates that were *more* exciting and *less* familiar (see Table 1).

To explore whether self-expansion experiences *outside the relationship* (i.e., without the partner) affects the types of dates people plan for a hypothetical couple, a series of independent t-tests and chi-square tests of independence were conducted. The results were consistent with the findings for growth inside the relationship.

Participants who read about Riley experiencing too much growth outside of the relationship ($M = 3.75$, $SD = 1.97$) suggested the couple engage in dates that were *less* exciting and *more* familiar compared to participants who read about Riley experiencing just enough growth outside the relationship ($M = 4.62$, $SD = 1.48$), $t(115) = 2.81$, $p = .006$. Conversely, participants who read about Riley experiencing not enough growth outside the relationship ($M = 5.77$, $SD = 1.31$) suggested the couple engage in dates that were *more* exciting and *less* familiar compared to participants who read about Riley experiencing just enough growth outside of the

relationship ($M = 4.62$, $SD = 1.56$), $t(129) = 4.70$, $p < .001$. The results of these t-tests suggest that the findings generalize to self-expansion outside the relationship.

The chi-square tests of independence for examining growth outside the relationship were consistent with the results found when examining the forced-choice date ratings for growth inside the relationship. In general, participants who read about Riley experiencing too much growth outside the relationship were more likely than those who read about Riley experiencing just enough growth outside the relationship to suggest the couple engage in dates that were *less* exciting and *more* familiar (Table 1). On the other hand, participants who read about Riley experiencing not enough growth in the relationship were generally more likely than those who read about Riley experiencing just enough growth in the relationship to suggest the couple engage in dates that were *more* exciting and *less* familiar (Table 1).

Taken together, the results found for expansion inside the relationship were also found for expansion outside the relationship. In other words, the types of dates participants selected for the hypothetical couple to engage in were affected by the amount of growth in both contexts (i.e., inside or outside the relationship).

Study 2

In Study 2, I aimed to extend the findings from Study 1 to examine the types of dates people plan in their own relationships. In this online study, participants answered questions about how much growth (i.e., self-expansion) they perceived within and outside of their relationship. Then, participants planned a date in an open-ended answer format and answered questions about the qualities of the dates they planned.

Method

Participants

A sample of at least 191 would allow me to detect a moderate to high correlation (d = .15) between my variable of interest (i.e., amount of self-expansion) and my dependent measures (i.e., excitement and familiarity of the date planned) with 80% power. The power analysis was conducted using G-power. I overrecruited to account for possible exclusions. A total of 280 Mturkers participated (in exchange for $0.50), but N = 59 were excluded due to ineligibility (i.e., not in a romantic relationship for 2 months) and N = 16 were excluded due to poor data (i.e., failed both attention checks or both open-ended bot-checker questions). The final sample size was N = 205 (59% men, M_{age}= 36.35 years, SD_{age}= 10.49). The majority of participants were Caucasian (76.9%), followed by African American (12.3%), Asian (7.5%), Aboriginal/Native American (1.4%) and 1.9% were bi- or multi-ethnic/racial or self-identified as "other". The majority classified their relationship as married/common law (60.8%). The remaining participants were seriously involved/exclusive (24.5%) or casually dating (14.6%). The average length of these relationships was approximately 6.13 years (M_{length} = 73.56 months, SD_{length} = 89.70, range 2 months – 40 years).

Materials and Procedure

Following registration for the study via MTurk participants were sent the link to complete the survey hosted on Qualtrics. The sign-up and informed consent were the same as Study 1. Participants who participated in the study were credited with $.50 for their participation.

Participants were asked a series of demographic questions about their romantic relationship (e.g., relationship status, length of the relationship) and other demographics (e.g., age and gender). Since this study was collected after COVID-19 had begun and involves date planning (which might be influenced by COVID-19 related restrictions), participants were also

asked whether they were social distancing, in self-isolation and if most businesses in their area were closed.

Participants then answered questions about the amount of growth (i.e., self-expansion) they were experiencing *in their relationship* compared to what they desire. More specifically, they were asked "To what extent do you feel you have **too much growth** in your relationship?" and "To what extent do you feel you **do not have enough growth** in your relationship?" both on scales from (1) *disagree* to (7) *agree completely*. The participants were given examples of growth (i.e., varied perspectives, knowledge/skills, expanded/broadened sense of self) based on Lewandowski and Aron, 2002. Participants then completed the same questions about the level of growth/expansion they were experiencing *outside of their relationship* compared to what they desire. The question was identical to the ones for self-expansion inside the relationship except that it focused on self-expansion outside of the relationship ("To what extent do you feel you have **too much growth** outside of your relationship?" and "To what extent do you feel you **do not have enough growth** outside of your relationship?") both on scales from (1) *disagree* to (7) *agree completely.* Participants were also asked questions about the growth/expansion they thought their partner felt there was in the relationship (*"*To what extent do you think your partner feels there is **too much growth** in your relationship?" and "To what extent do you think your partner feels there is **not enough growth** in your relationship?") both on scales from (1) *disagree* to (7) *agree completely.* The means and standard deviations for all independent and dependent variables are shown in Table 2.

The purpose of the questions on familiarity and comfort were to ensure participants were not aware that the study was about self-expansion and to avoid participant bias, however I also explored whether the amount of familiarity and comfort participants were experiencing affected

the types of dates they planned. Participants answered two questions on the level of familiarity and comfort *in their relationship* compared to what they desire ("To what extent do you feel you have **too much familiarity and comfort** in your relationship?" and "To what extent do you feel you **do not have enough familiarity and comfort** in your relationship) both on scales from (1) *disagree* to (7) *agree completely*. The questions included examples of familiarity and comfort (i.e., stability, predictability and established routines) based on terms from Cortes (2018) and Harasymchuk et al. (2020) to help participants understand what is meant by these terms. Participants were also asked the same questions framed in terms of familiarity and comfort *outside of the relationship* ("To what extent do you feel you have **too much familiarity and comfort** outside of your relationship?" and "To what extent do you feel you **do not have enough familiarity and comfort** outside of your relationship?") both on scales from (1) *disagree* to (7) *agree completely*. Participants were then asked questions about the familiarity and comfort they thought their partner felt there was in the relationship (*"To what extent do you think your partner feels there is* **too much familiarity and comfort** in your relationship?" and "To what extent do you think your partner feels there is **not enough familiarity and comfort** in your relationship?") both on scales from (1) *disagree* to (7) *agree completely.*

Next, participants were asked to plan a date in an open-ended format ("In the space below, please describe the date activity that you are planning for you and your partner in as much detail as possible."). Upon planning a date for them and their partner they rated the date they planned on various date qualities. The date qualities included familiarity and excitement.

Date Qualities

I defined self-expanding activities as any activity that was exciting (i.e., novel and arousing). As such, I measured the excitement of the dates planned to determine whether the

dates planned were self-expanding. The **excitement** subscale from the Four Factor Romantic Relationship Scale (FFRR) adapted from Malouff et al., (2012) was used to measure how exciting the dates participants planned were. The FFRR measures the degree a participant agrees or disagrees with a particular statement in this case about the date they planned ranging from (1) *very slightly or not at all* to (5) *extremely*. Example items include, "exciting", "playful", "adventurous", and "spontaneous". To examine the **familiarity** of the date, items representing familiarity and comfort were added to the excitement subscale of the FFRR. Items added include "comforting", "familiar", "different" (reverse-coded), and "novel" (reverse-coded).

Participants also completed Hendrick's (1988) measure of **relationship satisfaction**. There were seven items included in the measure of relationship satisfaction and the questions were adapted to represent the current moment. Example items include, "How satisfied were you with your relationship today?" (1 = not at all to 5 = extremely) and "How close did you feel to your partner today? (1 = not at all to 5 = extremely)". There were also two reverse-coded questions, "How many problems are there in your relationship right now" (1 = very few to 5 = very many) and "How much do you wish you hadn't gotten into this relationship right now? (1 = not at all to 5 = extremely). The inter-item reliability was $a = .63$. Participants then completed the **personal self-expansion questionnaire**. The personal self-expansion questionnaire by Gordon and Luo (2011) is a measure of individual differences in self-expansion. There are ten items in this scale. Sample questions include "I am always interested in finding new things to try" and "I place a lot of importance on experiencing new things" (1 = Strongly disagree to 5 = Strongly agree). Five items were reverse scored for example, "I generally prefer to have more familiarity and stability" and "Exploring something in depth is usually tedious and boring" (1 =

Strongly disagree to 5 = Strongly agree). The inter-item reliability was a = .72. See Appendix J

for the complete measures.

Results

In Study 2, I aimed to examine whether the findings from Study 1 on hypothetical

couples extended to people's relationships. Before conducting my analyses, I cleaned the data

and checked my assumptions were met. A series of simple linear regressions were conducted to

test the hypotheses.

Data Cleaning

The assumptions of linearity between the independent and dependent variables,

multivariate normality, no or little multicollinearity, no auto-correlation and homoscedasticity

were all met for each of my variables. The outliers detected did not significantly impact the

results, so they were included in the analyses. As in Study 1, participants were filtered out for

poor data quality (N = 16). Participants were removed if they failed both attention checks (i.e.,

failed to pick a particular response) or if they failed the two open-ended bot-catcher questions

(i.e., the open-ended responses were strange and non-sensical). Once the data was cleaned, I

proceeded with the analyses.

Preliminary Analyses

To assess whether there was a relation between each of my independent variables (i.e.,

amount of self-expansion and context of self-expansion) and my dependent variables (i.e.,

excitement and familiarity), bivariate correlations were conducted. The means for all

independent and dependent variables is presented in Table 2. There was a positive association

between the extent to which someone was experiencing *too much self-expansion* (growth) in

their relationship and their *excitement* ratings for the date they planned, $r(210)$ = .33, p < .001.

Conversely, there was a negative association between the extent to which someone was experiencing *too much self-expansion* in their relationship and their *familiarity* ratings for the date they planned, $r(210) = -.27$, $p < .001$.

There was not a significant association between the extent to which someone was experiencing *not enough self-expansion* in their relationship and their *excitement* ratings for the date they planned, $r(210) = -.09$, $p = .17$. There was a negative association between the extent to which someone was experiencing *not enough self-expansion* in their relationship and their ratings of *familiarity* for the date they planned, $r(210) = -.31$, $p < .001$. The correlations between self-expansion *outside the relationship* and planned date ratings followed the same pattern as the correlations for self-expansion *inside the relationship* (see Table 3).

To examine the relation between the predictor variables a series of correlations were conducted (see Table 4). Experiencing too much self-expansion *inside* the *relationship* was strongly positively correlated with experiencing too much self-expansion *outside the relationship* and with *perceived partner experiences* of too much self-expansion (see Table 4). Similarly, experiencing *not enough self-expansion inside the relationship* was strongly positively correlated with experiencing not enough self-expansion *outside the relationship* and *perceived partner experiences* of not enough self-expansion (see Table 4). These results indicate that experiences of self-expansion (growth) apply to all domains (i.e., relationship, life, partner) and are not domain specific. Correlations between the too much self-expansion variables and not enough self-expansion variables were positive but small to moderate in size (see Table 4).

I also examined whether the amount of self-expansion was correlated with relationship satisfaction. Relationship satisfaction was negatively correlated with all independent variables (see Table 3). For those who reported higher relationship satisfaction, they were less likely to

report experiencing too much or not enough self-expansion (growth) both within and outside of

their relationship (see Table 3). They were also less likely to report experiencing too much or not

enough familiarity both within and outside of their relationship (see Table 3). There was a

positive association between relationship satisfaction and both dependent variables (see Table 3).

Reporting higher relationship satisfaction was associated with date ratings characterized by more

excitement and more familiarity.

A correlation was conducted between my two dependent variables (i.e., excitement and

familiarity) to determine whether a composite measure could be created. The correlation between

the dependent variables was negative but weak, so each was treated as a separate outcome

variable in the analyses, $r(210) = -.24$, $p < .001$.

Main Analyses

Hypothesis 1

A summary of the simple linear regressions for self-expansion (growth) inside the

relationship on date planning is presented in Table 5. A simple linear regression was conducted

to assess whether experiencing *too much self-expansion* (growth) in the relationship would

predict planning dates characterized by *less* excitement and *more* familiarity. Contrary to my

hypothesis, the extent to which someone was experiencing too much self-expansion in their

relationship predicted planning a date that was rated by the participant as *more* exciting, $b = .12$,

$t(210) = 4.99$, $p < .001$. For every one unit increase in the extent to which participants were

experiencing too much self-expansion in their relationship, there was a .12 increase in the

excitement ratings for the date they planned. The extent to which someone was experiencing too

much self-expansion in their relationship explained approximately 11% of the variance of the

planned date excitement ratings. In contrast, the extent to which someone was experiencing too

much self-expansion in their relationship predicted planning a date that was rated by the participant as *less* familiar, $b = -.11$, $t(210) = -4.03$, $p < .001$. For every one unit increase in the extent to which participants were experiencing too much self-expansion in their relationship, there was a .11 decrease in the familiarity ratings for the date they planned. The extent to which someone was experiencing too much self-expansion in their relationship explained approximately 7% of the variance in the planned date familiarity ratings.

Exploratory Analyses

The extent to which someone was experiencing not enough self-expansion in their relationship was not a significant predictor of the excitement of the date they planned, $b = -.04$, $t = -1.37$, $p = .17$. The prediction that the extent to which people were experiencing not enough self-expansion in their relationship would predict planning dates characterized by less familiarity was supported, $b = -.12$, $t = -4.78$, $p < .001$. For every one unit increase in the extent to which participants were experiencing not enough self-expansion in their relationship, there was a .12 decreased in the familiarity of the planned date. The extent to which participants were experiencing not enough growth in their relationship explained approximately 10% of the variance in the planned date familiarity ratings.

I also conducted a series of simple linear regressions to examine self-expansion *outside the relationship* variables (too much and not enough) on date planning (excitement and familiarity). The results for self-expansion (growth) *outside the relationship* were consistent with the results for self-expansion (growth) *inside the relationship*. The extent to which someone was experiencing too much self-expansion outside of their relationship predicted planning a date that was rated by the participant as *more* exciting, $b = .11$, $t(210) = 4.36$, $p < .001$. For every one unit increase in the extent to which someone was experiencing too much self-expansion outside of

their relationship, there was a .11 increase in the excitement ratings for the date they planned.

The extent to which someone was experiencing too much self-expansion outside of their

relationships explained approximately 8% of the variance of the planned date excitement ratings.

In contrast, the extent to which someone was experiencing too much self-expansion outside of

their relationship predicted planning a date that was rated by the participant as *less* familiar, $b = -$

.10, $t(210) = -3.60$, $p < .001$. For every one unit increase in the extent to which participants were

experiencing too much self-expansion in their relationship, there was a .10 decrease in the

familiarity ratings for the date they planned. The extent to which someone was experiencing too

much self-expansion in their relationship explained approximately 6% of the variance in the

planned date ratings for familiarity.

Consistent with the results from inside the relationship, the extent to which someone was

experiencing not enough self-expansion (growth) outside of their relationship was not a

significant predictor of the excitement of the date they planned, $b = -.03$, $t = -1.10$, $p = .27$. As

was found for self-expansion inside the relationship, experiencing not enough self-expansion

outside of the relationship predicted planning dates characterized by less familiarity, $b = -.09$, $t =$

-3.29, $p = .001$. For every one unit increase in the extent to which participants were experiencing

not enough self-expansion outside their relationship, there was a .09 decrease in familiarity date

ratings. The extent to which participants were experiencing not enough growth outside of their

relationship explained approximately 5% of the variance in the planned date ratings for

familiarity. Perceptions of partner growth on date planning were also examined and were

consistent with the results for growth inside and outside the relationship.[3]

I also explored whether the amount of familiarity someone was experiencing affected the

types of dates they planned in their relationship. I expected inverse relations for familiarity (e.g.,

too much familiarity plan dates that were higher in excitement). As expected, the extent to which someone was experiencing *too much familiarity* (inside or outside of their relationship) predicted rating the date they planned as *more* exciting (see Table 6). Conversely, the extent to which someone was experiencing too much familiarity (inside or outside of their relationship) predicted rating the date they planned as *less* familiar (see Table 6).

When examining *not enough* familiarity, the extent to which someone was experiencing not enough familiarity *in their relationship* did not predict planned date excitement ratings (see Table 6). However, the extent to which someone was experiencing *not enough* familiarity *outside of their relationship* predicted rating the date they planned as *more* exciting. Contrary to my expectations, the extent to which someone was experiencing *not enough* familiarity (inside or outside of their relationship) predicted rating the date they planned as *less* familiar (see Table 6). Additionally, personal expansion on date planning was also assessed.[4]

Discussion

Through examining self-expansion perceptions on date planning this thesis provides further insight on how self-expansion perceptions affect relationship maintenance behavior (i.e., shared leisure activities). Research has shown that couples' joint engagement in self-expanding (i.e., exciting and novel) activities is beneficial to relationship functioning, but there is not a lot of research on the obstacles that inhibit people from planning self-expanding dates. My hypothesis that people who experience too much self-expansion in their relationship will plan dates was supported for hypothetical couples (Study 1), but not for people's own relationship (Study 2). These results suggest that people think others should modify their relationship maintenance behaviours (i.e., shared leisure) based on their current perceptions of self-expansion (i.e., too much, not enough), but may not always do so for themselves.

Additions to Self-Expansion Model

The results of Study 1 are consistent with the self-expansion model (Aron & Aron, 1986). Based on the self-expansion model, people who have been in a state of high growth/expansion in a particular domain (in this case the relationship domain) will seek out reduced novelty and complexity and increased familiarity to allow themselves to integrate these highly expanding experiences into their self-concept (i.e., the integration phase). In this case, when people read about someone experiencing *too much* relational expansion, they thought that the couple should reduce the excitement (i.e., expansion) in the relationship which would allow for the couple to integrate their current novel and exciting experiences into their self-concept before seeking out further expansion. The self-expansion model also theorizes that when someone is in a state of low growth/expansion in a particular domain (i.e., relationship domain) they will seek out opportunities to increase their expansion within that domain (i.e., expansion phase). This was illustrated in Study 1 where participants selected dates for the couple that were *more* exciting (i.e., expanding) and *less* familiar (Study 1) when they read about someone experiencing *not enough* relational expansion. These results support that the self-expansion model involves both an expansion phase where people seek out increased excitement (i.e., not enough growth) and an integration phase where people seek out reduced excitement (i.e., too much growth). This is important because research has primarily focused on the expansion phase and the integration phase has been largely ignored.

The results described only reflect hypothetical couples (Study 1) and do not reflect people's own relationships (Study 2). The results for Study 2 were inconsistent with the results from Study 1, which may suggest that although people think others should modify their

relationship maintenance behaviours (i.e., shared leisure) based on their current perceptions of self-expansion (i.e., too much, too little), they may not always do so for themselves.

Self-Expansion Beyond the Relationship

In both Study 1 and 2 the findings for growth/expansion outside the relationship were consistent with the results for growth/expansion inside the relationship This suggests that people may not differentiate their experiences of growth/expansion based on the different domains (i.e., relationship vs other). For instance, in Study 1 participants suggested the couple engage in dates that were *less* exciting and *more* familiar when they read about someone experiencing too much growth/expansion inside *or* outside their relationship. One possible explanation for the similar results for growth/expansion inside and outside of the relationship is that people may not be differentiating between experiences of relationship growth and experiences of growth in other domains. This could mean that people cannot discern the source of their growth (i.e., within or outside of the relationship), but it could also mean that they choose not to differentiate their experiences based on the source of the growth. When thinking about the results of Study 1 this suggests that people seek to create change through any source. In the context of *too much* growth/expansion, the findings from Study 1 can also be related to Aron and Aron's (1986) proposition that there is a total expansion capacity and once this has been met no further expansion can occur until successful integration has occurred, a process that requires reduced novelty and excitement. Therefore, if someone is experiencing too much growth overall, they will aim to reduce the novelty and excitement they are experiencing in any domain in order to achieve the reduced novelty and excitement necessary for successful integration of growth/expansion experiences into the self-concept.

This thesis provides support for many aspects of the self-expansion model and demonstrates the importance of self-expansion perceptions (too much or not enough) both within

and outside of the relationship in determining relationship maintenance behaviour (i.e., shared leisure activities).

Limitations

However, these studies do have some limitations. In Study 1, I used hypothetical scenarios which limits the conclusions that can be made. Past research has demonstrated that people will suggest to others what they would do for themselves, however it is still a limit to the generalizability of the results (Pronin, Olivolar, & Kennedy, 2008; Stone, Yates, & Caruthers, 2006). Study 2 was conducted to extend the findings to peoples' own relationships, but this was limited by my inability to capture the "too much" aspect of growth. It is likely that participants misunderstood the "too much growth" variable as "growth". The concept of too much growth is difficult to grasp and the wording of the question did not get at it sufficiently. Instead of understanding the question as to what extent do you have too much growth (e.g., varied perspectives, knowledge/skills, expanded/broadened sense of self) it seems likely that participants may have understood the question as to what extent do you feel you have growth (e.g., varied perspectives, knowledge skills, expanded/broadened sense of self).

Another limitation to these studies was the lack of sample diversity. Both Study 1 and 2 were conducted using Mturk. This platform was chosen because it provides access to a community sample, however there is still issues with sample diversity. Both studies consisted of mainly Caucasian participants which means the results may not generalize as well to other ethnicities. Other demographics like age and gender were varied and do not pose an issue to the generalizability of the findings.

Another limitation to Study 1 was that although there were a few general questions most of the dependent variable items involved participants choosing between two specific dates. This

was done to reduce participant strain, but since some dates showed more differences between groups than others it suggests that the results cannot be generalized to all types of dates. It is also important to address that Study 1 was conducted before COVID-19 and Study 2 was conducted during COVID-19, which may have impacted the findings.

Future Directions

Research on self-expansion perceptions and the integration phase of the self-expansion model are still in their early days and there is a lot more research needed due to the many implications of this research. There is a lot of evidence supporting the notion that couples' joint engagement in self-expanding activities can increase relationship satisfaction, however the integration phase of the self-expansion model remains largely unstudied. It would be beneficial for more research to be conducted on the integration stage of the self-expansion model to understand the importance of the integration stage for relationships. In particular, developing tools to assess the integration phase of the self-expansion model would be beneficial as it would allow much more research to be conducted on this stage of the model. Further investigating the integration stage of the self-expansion model would help develop our understanding of the role it plays in relationship functioning and help to support the theory behind the self-expansion model proposed by Aron and Aron in 1986. As well, it would be beneficial to determine better ways to measure "too much" growth to examine whether people can have too much growth in their relationship and how that affects relationship maintenance behaviour.

Additionally, a relationship involves two people and their interactions therefore studying couples is critical. In this paper I was able to include partner effects in Study 2, but future work should include both couple members to better understand couple interactions. Examining how the partners' expansion perceptions affect relationship maintenance behaviour and date planning

would help to extend the findings of this work further. The role of the other couple member is an important aspect in understanding the impact of self-expansion perceptions on relationship maintenance behaviour. For example, to understand how the self-expansion perceptions of each *couple* member affect the types of dates couples engage in.

Conclusion

This research has provided a larger understanding of the importance of self-expansion perceptions on date planning. Although there are a lot of benefits to couples' engagement in self-expanding dates, this research provides evidence that people do not always seek out self-expanding dates and that peoples' self-expansion perceptions affect their relationship maintenance behaviour. Based on this research, when people read about someone who is experiencing *too much self-expansion* in their relationship, they think the couple should reduce the excitement in their relationship. On the other hand, they believe that someone who is experiencing *not enough self-expansion* in their relationship should increase relationship excitement. Examining self-expansion perceptions on date planning allows for a greater understanding of their influence on relationship maintenance behaviour.

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Footnotes

[1] The 40% exclusion of participants in Study 1 was based on the exclusion criteria set up before running the study. The recruitment notice and the informed consent provided to participants via Amazon's Mechanical Turk indicated that participants had to be in a relationship for at least 2 months to be eligible to participate in the study. In Study 2, we proactively excluded participants if they indicated that they were not in a relationship for at least 2 months.

[2] Whether the gender of participants matched the gender of the hypothetical couple member could be a covariate. Whether the gender of the participant matched the gender of the hypothetical couple member (i.e., Riley) could have affected the results. When the participants' gender was matched with the hypothetical couple member (e.g., both female) participants may have been more likely to choose dates that were more similar to what they would do for themselves than when the participants' gender was not aligned with the gender of the hypothetical couple member (e.g., participant female and Riley male).

[3] Simple linear regressions analyzing perceptions of partner self-expansion (growth) on date planning for Study 2. The extent to which someone felt their partner was experiencing *too much* self-expansion in the relationship predicted planning a date that was rated by the participant as *more* exciting, $b = .10$, $t = 4.33$, $p < .001$. The extent to which someone felt their partner was experiencing *too much* self-expansion in the relationship predicted planning a date that was rated by the participant as *less* familiar, $b = -.10$, $t = -4.11$, $p < .001$. The extent to which someone felt their partner was experiencing *not enough self-expansion* in the relationship was not a significant predictor of date excitement, $b = -.02$, $t = -.84$, $p = 40$. The extent to which someone felt their partner was experiencing *not enough self-expansion* in the relationship predicted planning a date that was rated by the participant as less familiar, $b = -.15$, $t = -6.00$, $p < .001$.

[4] Simple linear regressions analyzing personal expansion on date planning. Personal expansion refers to the trait differences in desire for self-expansion. Having a higher desire for self-expansion predicted planning dates that were rated by participants as more exciting, $b = .26$, $t = 2.95$, $p < .01$. However, higher desire for self-expansion was not a significant predictor of date ratings for familiarity, $b = .08$, $t = .83$, $p = .41$.

List of Tables

Table 1

Relation Between Growth Conditions and Forced-Choice Date Ratings

Dates Rated	Too much vs. Just enough growth (inside)	Not enough vs. Just enough growth (inside)	Too much vs. Just enough familiarity (outside)	Not enough vs. Just enough familiarity (outside)
New/familiar movie	38.50***	5.35*	10.46***	3.81*
New/familiar class	34.61***	4.78*	4.44*	10.55***
Walk/hike	8.14**	3.95*	2.99	8.68**
New/familiar cook	25.45***	5.28*	7.82**	6.86**
Home/go out movie	10.66***	8.60**	4.11*	3.35

Note. All results presented are chi-square statistics.

* = $p \leq .05$, ** = $p \leq .01$, *** = $p \leq .001$.

Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations of Study Variables

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation
1. Too much growth (inside	4.05	1.90
2. Not enough growth (inside)	3.82	1.92
3. Too much growth (outside)	4.08	1.89
4. Not enough growth (outside)	4.10	1.80
5. Too much familiarity (inside)	4.49	1.92
6. Not enough familiarity (inside)	3.40	2.04
7. Too much familiarity (outside)	4.20	1.85
8. Not enough familiarity (outside)	3.88	1.87
9. Partner too much growth	3.98	1.98
10. Partner not enough growth	3.65	1.96
11. Partner too much familiarity	4.21	1.93
12. Partner not enough familiarity	3.50	1.97
13. Excitement (DV)	3.59	.71
14. Familiarity (DV)	3.36	.75
15. Relationship Quality	4.00	.75

Table 3

Summary of Correlations Between Predictor Variables and Dependent Variables

	Excitement Ratings	Familiarity Ratings	Relationship Quality
	r	*r*	*r*
Too much growth (inside)	.33**	-.27	-.23**
Not enough growth (inside)	-.09	-.31**	-.46**
Too much growth (outside)	.29**	-.24**	-.22**
Not enough growth (outside)	-.08	-.22**	-.30**
Too much familiarity (inside)	.23**	-.29**	-.29**
Not enough familiarity (inside)	.04	-.36**	-.37**
Too much familiarity (outside)	.29**	-.29**	-.24**
Not enough familiarity (outside)	-.17*	-.25**	-.40**
Partner too much growth	.29**	-.27**	-.24**
Partner not enough growth	-.06	-.38**	-.44**
Partner too much familiarity	.25**	-.27**	-.29**
Partner not enough familiarity	.00	-.33**	-.40**
Excitement (DV)	—	-.24**	.25**
Familiarity (DV)	—	—	.23**
Relationship Quality	—	—	—

Note. All results presented are bivariate correlation statistics. Rel. = Relationship
$* = p \leq .05, ** = p \leq .01, *** = p \leq .001.$

Table 4

Summary of Correlations Between Growth Predictor Variables

Growth Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Too much inside	—	.28**	.81**	.19**	.81**	.43**
2. Not enough inside	.28**	—	.31**	.67**	.36**	.67**
3. Too much outside	.81**	.31**	—	.20**	.80**	.41**
4. Not enough outside	.19**	.67**	.20**	—	.23**	.59**
5. Partner too much	.81**	.36**	.80**	.23**	—	.38**
6. Partner not enough	.43**	.67**	.41**	.59**	.38**	—

Note. ** = $p < .01$.

Table 5

Summary of Regression Analyses for Growth Predicting Planned Date Ratings

	Excitement Ratings			Familiarity Ratings		
	B	*t*	R^2	*B*	*t*	R^2
Too much inside	.12	5.00***	.11	-.11	-4.03**	.07
Not enough inside	-.04	-1.40	.01	-.12	-4.78**	.10
Too much outside	.11	4.40***	.08	-.10	-3.60**	.06
Not enough outside	-.03	-1.10	.01	-.10	-3.29**	.05

Note. All results presented are simple linear regression statistics.
* = $p \le .05$, ** = $p \le .01$, *** = $p \le .001$.

Table 6

Summary of Regression Analyses for Familiarity Predicting Planned Date Ratings

	Excitement Ratings			Familiarity Ratings		
	B	*t*	R^2	*B*	*t*	R^2
Too much inside	.08	3.39***	.05	-.12	-4.46**	.09
Not enough inside	.02	.63	.002	-.13	-5.61**	.01
Too much outside	.11	4.40***	.08	-.12	-4.47**	.08
Not enough outside	-.06	-2.48**	.03	-.10	-3.74**	.06

Note. All results presented are simple linear regression statistics.
* = $p \leq .05$, ** = $p \leq .01$, *** = $p \leq .001$.

List of Appendices

Study 1

Appendix A

Recruitment Notice – Mechanical Turk

Study Name: Plan a date!

Description: This online study examines date planning in a hypothetical situation. You will be asked to read about a hypothetical couple and answer some questions about yourself and the couple (~7 minutes).

Eligibility Requirements: In order to qualify for this study, you must:

-   Currently be in a close romantic relationship for at least 2 months

Compensation: You will earn USD $0.50 credit for meeting the requirements of the study and completing the study.

Risks: There is no known risk in the current study.

Researchers: Chloe Jones ChloeJones@cmail.carleton.ca; Dr. Cheryl Harasymchuk (Cheryl.Harasymchuk@carleton.ca, Faculty Sponsor)

This study has been cleared by the Carleton University Research Ethics Board – (Number will be included here)

On the last page of the survey, you will find your personalized completion code. Please copy and paste your completion code here in order to receive compensation for your participation. _____

Appendix B

Informed Consent Form

The purpose of an informed consent form is to ensure that you, as the participant, understand the purpose of the study as well as the nature of your involvement. The informed consent form should provide sufficient information such that you have the opportunity to determine whether or not you wish to participate in the study.

Title of study: Help plan a date!

Contact Information

Research Personnel: The following people are involved in conducting this research project and may be contacted at any time should you have any questions or concerns: Chloe Jones ChloeJones@cmail.carleton.ca (master's thesis student), Cheryl Harasymchuk, Ph.D. (Faculty Sponsor, Cheryl.Harasymchuk@carleton.ca).

Ethical concerns: This study has received clearance from the Carleton University Research Ethics Board (#_____), If you have any ethical concerns with the current study, please contact Dr. Andy Adler, Chair, Carleton University Research Ethics Board-A/B (by phone: 613-520-2600 ext. 4850 or email: ethics@carleton.ca).

Purpose: The purpose of the study is to explore date planning for a hypothetical couple.

Task requirements: You will complete questionnaires about yourself and a hypothetical couple. This survey should take approximately 7 minutes to complete.

Potential Benefits: You will receive USD $0.50 credit for your participation.

Potential risk and/or discomfort: There is no known risk in the current study. We do not expect you to feel any discomfort in answering any of the posed questionnaires. Nevertheless, if

you do happen to feel unease when answering any of the questions, you may skip these without any penalty.

Confidentiality and anonymity: All information provided will be kept confidential. Only the researchers involved will be permitted to access information that you give. As well, the identifying information (i.e., your name and email address) will not be stored with your responses for the study. We will assign an identifier number with your responses in a data set.

Right to withdraw: Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. At any point during the study you have the right to not answer any questions or to withdraw without penalty. Questions can be skipped by leaving the answer blank and moving onto the next question. If you choose to withdraw before the conclusion of the study, you will still be awarded the USD $0.50 credit.

By default, data from participants who withdraw or are withdrawn will be kept. If you wish to have your data removed, you may contact the researcher within two weeks of your withdrawal. This study has been cleared by the Carleton University Research Ethics Board (#_____).

Consent: By clicking on the "I agree" button below, I acknowledge that I have read the description of the research and I understand that this study examines shared activities in relationships. I understand that the data in this study will be used for research and application purposes. I understand that my participation is completely voluntary, and that all information given will be kept confidential.

| **I agree and wish to participate** | **I do not wish to participate** |

Appendix C

Debriefing Form

The purpose of this study was to explore the types of dates that individuals suggest for a hypothetical couple. The study was designed to explore whether people who read about a hypothetical couple experiencing too much growth (vs. just enough or not enough) will be less likely to plan dates that are exciting and new for a hypothetical couple.

I predict that when people read about a hypothetical person experiencing too much growth (vs. just enough or not enough) they will suggest dates that are less exciting and new. I am also exploring whether the context of the growth (within the relationship or outside of the relationship) affects the types of dates people suggest for a hypothetical couple.

This research will provide further knowledge of how growth affects relationships and whether the context of the growth (within the relationship or outside of the relationship) is important for date planning. Research suggests that the dates people suggest for others reflect what they would do themselves therefore through examining the types of dates people suggest for a hypothetical couple I aim to further the knowledge on the dates people plan when they are experiencing too much growth in their lives.

Please be assured that your responses will be treated confidentially. In any public presentation of our data, either in print or in speech, we will not present any information that could identify a participant.

Health Services

If you have any personal concerns about your physical health or emotional well-being that you would like to discuss with somebody, you might wish to contact the Carleton University Health and Counselling Services at: 613-520-6674. You may also contact the Distress Centre of Ottawa

and Region at 613-238-3311, or for French services call Tel-Aide Outaouais at 613-741-

6433. Both English and French centres offer 24-hour anonymous and confidential help.

Contacts

The following people are involved in this research project and may be contacted at any time if

you have any further questions about the project, what it means, or concerns about how it was

conducted:

Dr. Cheryl Harasymchuk (Cheryl.Harasymchuk@carleton.ca)

Chloe Jones ChloeJones@cmail.carleton.ca (master's thesis student);

If you have any ethical concerns with the current study, please contact Dr. Andy Adler, Chair,

Carleton University Research Ethics Board-A/B (by phone: 613-520-2600 ext. 4850 or email:

ethics@carleton.ca).

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!

Please proceed to the next page to receive your completion code, and to exit the survey

Appendix D

Withdrawal Form

The following will be shown to participants who indicate that they fit any of the following

criteria, contrary to the eligibility requirements for the study:

- are not currently in a romantic relationship (Single, Divorced)

- have not been in a romantic relationship for at least 2 months

Thank you for completing the study "Help plan a date!"

As you do not meet the eligibility requirements at this time (i.e., you are not currently in a

romantic relationship for at least 2 months), you have now been withdrawn from the study. You

will still be granted USD $0.50 credit for completion of this survey.

Please proceed to the next page to receive your completion code, and to exit the survey.

Appendix E

Plan a date! – Questionnaire

Demographic Questionnaire

1. Which gender do you most identify with?

> Man, woman, transgendered, other (please specify)

2. What is your age (in years)?

3. Which ethnic/ cultural/ racial group do you most identify with?

> Caucasian / White
>
> Aboriginal / Native American
>
> African-American / Black
>
> Middle Eastern
>
> Asian
>
> Other (please specify below)

4. What is your current relationship status?

> Single
>
> Casually Dating
>
> Seriously Involved (Exclusive)
>
> Married / Common Law

Condition: Single is Selected. Skip To: End of Survey

5. How long have you been in your current relationship (in months)?

6. Do you consider your relationship to be a long-distance relationship?

Yes

No

9. Are you engaged to your partner?

Yes

No

7. Do you live together with your partner?

Yes

No

Vignettes of Hypothetical Couple – Experimental Conditions

Participants will see ONE of six vignettes. This is because the study involves a 3 (growth: too much, just enough, not enough) X 2 (context: inside the relationship, outside the relationship) design.

1. For the *too much growth inside the relationship* condition participants will read:

Riley and her/his partner have just moved to a new city and s/he feels like a lot is changing. Riley and her/his partner have been exploring their neighbourhood and trying to navigate this unfamiliar environment. They have been learning things about each other and Riley feels like s/he is gaining a lot of knowledge about her/his partner. Riley and her/his partner have been meeting new people and trying to make friends. S/he feels like going through these experiences with her/his partner is changing her/his sense of self and her/his perspectives have become varied from what they were before the move. **In general, Riley feels like there is too much growth and development (**varied perspectives, knowledge/skills and an expanded/broadened sense of self) **in her/his relationship.**

2. For the *just enough growth inside the relationship* condition participants will read:

Riley and her/his partner have just moved to a new city and s/he feels like a lot is changing. Riley and her/his partner have been exploring their neighbourhood and trying to navigate this unfamiliar environment. They have been learning things about each other and Riley feels like s/he is gaining a lot of knowledge about her/his partner. Riley and her/his partner have been meeting new people and trying to make friends. S/he feels like going through these experiences with her/his partner is changing her/his sense of self and her/his perspectives have become varied from what they were before the move. **In general, Riley feels like there is**

too much growth and development (varied perspective, knowledge/skills, broadened/expanded sense of self) in her/his relationship.

3. For the *not enough growth inside the relationship* condition participants will read: Riley and her/his partner have just moved to a new city and s/he feels like a lot is changing. Riley and her/his partner have been exploring their neighbourhood and trying to navigate this unfamiliar environment. They have been learning things about each other and Riley feels like s/he is gaining a lot of knowledge about her/his partner. Riley and her/his partner have been meeting new people and trying to make friends. S/he feels like going through these experiences with her/his partner is changing her/his sense of self and her/his perspectives have become varied from what they were before the move. **In general, Riley feels like there is not enough growth and development (varied perspectives, knowledge/skills and an expanded/broadened sense of self) in her/his relationship.**

4. For the *too much growth outside of the relationship condition* participants will read: Riley and her/his partner have just moved to a new city and s/he feels like a lot is changing. Riley has been exploring her/his neighbourhood and trying to navigate this unfamiliar environment. S/he has been learning things through this experience and gaining a lot of knowledge. Riley has been meeting new people and trying to make friends. S/he feels like the people and the settings are so different than what s/he is used to and this is making her/his feel like her/his sense of self is changing and her/his perspectives have become varied from what they were before the move. **In general, Riley feels like there is too much growth and development (varied perspectives, knowledge/skills and an expanded/broadened sense of self) in her/his life.**

5. For the *just enough growth outside of the relationship condition* participants will read:

Riley and her/his partner have just moved to a new city and s/he feels like a lot is changing. Riley has been exploring her/his neighbourhood and trying to navigate this unfamiliar environment. S/he has been learning things through this experience and gaining a lot of knowledge. Riley has been meeting new people and trying to make friends. S/he feels like the people and the settings are so different than what s/he is used to and this is making her/his feel like her/his sense of self is changing and her/his perspectives have become varied from what they were before the move. **In general, Riley feels like there is just enough growth and development (varied perspectives, knowledge/skills and an expanded/broadened sense of self) in her/his life.**

6. For the *not enough growth outside of the relationship condition* participants will read*:*
Riley and her/his partner have just moved to a new city and s/he feels like a lot is changing. Riley has been exploring her/his neighbourhood and trying to navigate this unfamiliar environment. S/he has been learning things through this experience and gaining a lot of knowledge. Riley has been meeting new people and trying to make friends. S/he feels like the people and the settings are so different than what s/he is used to and this is making her/his feel like her/his sense of self is changing and her/his perspectives have become varied from what they were before the move. **In general, Riley feels like there is not enough growth and development (varied perspectives, knowledge/skills and an expanded/broadened sense of self) in her/his life.**

Date Quality Ratings (Rating pairs of dates)

Continuous Ratings

Based on the scenario you just read, what types of activities should Riley initiate in the relationship?

Develop an old skill	Learn a new skill
1	7

*Explore a new area	Visit a familiar area
1	7

Do something comfortable and familiar	Do something new and unfamiliar
1	7

Forced-Choice Ratings

For each question please choose one of the two dates for Riley to initiate in the relationship.

*Attend a familiar class	Attend a new class
1	2

Watch a new movie	Watch a familiar movie
1	2

*Take a walk	Go on a hike
1	2

Cook a meal they make often	Cook a new meal
1	2

Watch a movie at home	Go to the movies
1	2

Study 2

Appendix F

Recruitment Notice – Mechanical Turk

The purpose of this study is to explore shared activities with your romantic partner. Within this

study, you will be asked to plan a date with your partner and answer some questions about

yourself and your relationship. The study should take around 10 minutes, and you will earn USD

$0.50 for your completion.

Eligibility Requirements: In order to qualify for this study, you must:

-   Currently be in a romantic relationship for at least 2 months

Your participation and all of your responses to this study will be strictly confidential. At the end

of the study, we will destroy all of your contact information (i.e., your name and email address).

Only the researchers associated with this project will have access to the data collected.

Researchers: Chloe Jones (chloejones@cmail.carleton.ca, masters thesis student); Dr. Cheryl

Harasymchuk (Cheryl.Harasymchuk@carleton.ca, Faculty Sponsor)

This study has been cleared by the Carleton University Research Ethics Board – (**CUREB-B**

Clearance #112117).

On the last page of the survey, you will find your personalized completion code. Please copy

and paste your completion code here in order to receive compensation for your

participation. _____

Appendix G

Informed Consent Form

The purpose of an informed consent form is to ensure that you, as the participant, understand the purpose of the study as well as the nature of your involvement. The informed consent form should provide sufficient information such that you have the opportunity to determine whether or not you wish to participate in the study.

Title of study: "Plan a Date Night!"

Contact Information

Research Personnel: The following people are involved in conducting this research project and may be contacted at any time should you have any questions or concerns: Chloe Jones (chloejones@cmail.carleton.ca, master's thesis student) and Cheryl Harasymchuk, Ph.D. (Faculty Sponsor, Cheryl.Harasymchuk@carleton.ca)

Ethical concerns: This study has received clearance from the Carleton University Research Ethics Board (**CUREB-B Clearance #112117**). If you have any ethical concerns with the current study, please contact Dr. Andy Adler, Chair, Carleton University Research Ethics Board-A/B (by phone: 613-520-2600 ext. 4850 or email: ethics@carleton.ca).

Purpose: The purpose of the study is to explore shared activities with your romantic partner.

Task requirements: You will complete questionnaires about yourself and your relationship. As well, you will be asked to plan a date for you and your romantic partner. This survey should take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete.

Potential Benefits: You will receive USD $0.50 for your participation in today's study.

Potential risk and/or discomfort: There is no known risk in the current study. We do not expect you to feel any discomfort in answering any of the posed questionnaires. Nevertheless,

some individuals may feel slightly unpleasant while reflecting on their emotions and relationship. If you do happen to feel unease when answering any of the questions, you may skip these without penalty. However, if you do feel unease when performing any activity, you may stop in the middle without any academic penalty.

Confidentiality and anonymity: All information provided will be kept confidential. Only the researchers involved will be permitted to access information that you give. As well, the identifying information (i.e., your name and email address) will not be stored with your responses for the study. We will assign an identifier number with your responses in a data set.

Right to withdraw: Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. At any point during the study you have the right to not answer any questions or to withdraw without penalty. Questions can be skipped by leaving the answer blank and moving onto the next question. If you choose to withdraw before the conclusion of the study, you will still be awarded the USD $0.50 credit.

By default, data from participants who withdraw or are withdrawn will be kept. If you wish to have your data removed, you may contact the researcher within two weeks of your withdrawal. This study has been cleared by the Carleton University Research Ethics Board (**CUREB-B Clearance #112117**).

Consent: By clicking on the "I agree" button below, I acknowledge that I have read the description of the research and I understand that this study examines shared activities in relationships. I understand that the data in this study will be used for research and application purposes. I understand that my participation is completely voluntary, and that all information given will be kept confidential.

I agree and wish to participate	I do not wish to participate

Appendix H

Debriefing Form

Thank you for participating in the "Plan a Date Night!". Now that the study is complete, we are providing you with the debriefing form where we highlight the purposes and hypotheses of the research in full.

The purpose of this study was to explore the types of dates that individuals plan their romantic partners. The current study was designed to explore whether people who are experiencing too much growth (vs. just enough or not enough growth) will plan dates that are less exciting and new. The study also examines whether the context of the growth (inside the relationship or outside of the relationship) affects the dates planned.

I predict that people who are experiencing too much growth will plan dates that are less new and exciting for their partners. I also predict that people who are experiencing not enough growth will plan dates that are new and higher in excitement.

This research will provide further knowledge of whether people can experience too much growth and how this affects date planning. This research could provide insight into why people do not always desire increased novelty and excitement in their relationships.

Please be assured that your responses will be treated confidentially. In any public presentation of our data, either in print or in speech, we will not present any information that could identify a participant.

Health Services

If you have any personal concerns about your physical health or emotional well-being that you would like to discuss with somebody, you might wish to contact the Carleton University Health and Counselling Services at: 613-520-6674.

Contacts

The following people are involved in this research project and may be contacted at any time if

you have any further questions about the project, what it means, or concerns about how it was

conducted:

Dr. Cheryl Harasymchuk (Cheryl.Harasymchuk@carleton.ca)

Chloe Jones (chloejones@cmail.carleton.ca)

If you have any ethical concerns with the current study, please contact Dr. Andy Adler, Chair,

Carleton University Research Ethics Board-A/B (by phone: 613-520-2600 ext. 4850 or email:

ethics@carleton.ca).

<div align="center">

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!

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Please proceed to the next page to receive your completion code, and to exit the survey.

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Appendix I

Withdrawal Form

The following will be shown to participants who indicate during the study that they fit any of the following criteria, contrary to the eligibility requirements for the study:

- are not currently in a romantic relationship (Single, Divorced)

- have not been in a romantic relationship for at least 2 months

Thank you for completing the study "Plan a Date Night!"

As you do not meet the eligibility requirements at this time (i.e., you are not currently in a romantic relationship for at least 2 months), you have now been withdrawn from the study. You will still be granted USD $0.50 credit for completion of this survey.

Please proceed to the next page to receive your completion code, and to exit the survey.

Appendix J

" Plan a Date Night!" Questionnaire

Demographic Questions

1. Which gender do you most identify with?

    Man, woman, transgendered, other (please specify)

2. What is your age (in years)?

3. Which ethnic/ cultural/ racial group do you most identify with?

    Caucasian / White

    Aboriginal / Native American

    African-American / Black

    Middle Eastern

    Asian

    Other (please specify below)

4. What is your current relationship status?

    Single

    Casually Dating

    Seriously Involved (Exclusive)

    Married / Common Law

    Divorced

Condition: Single or Divorced is Selected. Skip To: End of Survey

5. How long have you been in your current relationship (in months)? _____

6. Do you consider your relationship to be a long-distance relationship?

    Yes

    No

7. Are you engaged to your partner?

    Yes

    No

8. Do you live together with your partner?

    Yes

    No

COVID-19 Questions

We will now ask you some questions about the restrictions that are in place in your area during this time.

Are you currently in self-isolation?
Yes
No

Are you currently social distancing?
Yes
No

Are most businesses in your area closed (for example, restaurants, bars and movie theatres)?
Yes
No

Botchecker Question 1

Please describe the traits you look for in a potential partner (2-3 sentences).

_____

_____

Expectations of Growth

Within the Relationship:

1. To what extent do you feel you have *too much growth* (e.g., varied perspectives, knowledge/skills, expanded/broadened sense of self) *in your relationship*?

Disagree						Agree Completely
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

2. To what extent do you feel you *do not have* enough growth (e.g., varied perspectives, knowledge/skills, expanded/broadened sense of self) *in your relationship*?

Disagree						Agree Completely
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Outside of the Relationship:

1. To what extent do you feel you have *too much growth* (e.g., varied perspectives, knowledge/skills, expanded/broadened sense of self) *outside of your relationship*?

Disagree						Agree Completely
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

2. To what extent do you feel you *do not have* enough growth (e.g., varied perspectives, knowledge/skills, expanded/broadened sense of self) *outside of your relationship*?

Disagree						Agree Completely

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Partner Effects:

1. To what extent do you think your partner feels there is **too much growth** (e.g., varied perspectives, knowledge/skills, expanded/broadened sense of self) **in your relationship**?

Disagree						Agree Completely
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

2. To what extent do you think your partner feels there is **not enough growth** (e.g., varied perspectives, knowledge/skills, expanded/broadened sense of self) **in your relationship**?

Disagree						Agree Completely
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Expectations of Familiarity and Comfort:

Within the Relationship:

1. To what extent do you feel you have *too much familiarity and comfort* (e.g., stability, predictability, established routines) *in your relationship*?

Disagree						Agree Completely
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

2. To what extent do you feel you *do not have* enough *familiarity and comfort* (e.g., stability, predictability, established routines) *in your relationship*?

Disagree						Agree Completely
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Outside of the Relationship:

1. To what extent do you feel you have *too much familiarity and comfort* (e.g., stability, predictability, established routines) *outside of your relationship*?

Disagree						Agree Completely
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

2. To what extent do you feel you *do not have familiarity and comfort* (e.g., stability, predictability, established routines) *outside of your relationship*?

Disagree						Agree Completely

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Partner Effects:

1. To what extent do you think your partner feels there is **too much** *familiarity and comfort* (e.g., stability, predictability, established routines) **in your relationship**?

Disagree						Agree Completely
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

2. To what extent do you think your partner feels there is **not enough** *familiarity and comfort* (e.g., stability, predictability, established routines) **in your relationship**?

Disagree						Agree Completely
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Planned Couple Activity

Please think about a date that you would like to engage in with your partner in the near future. This date may be anything of your choosing.

In the space below, please describe in detail the date activity that you have thought of to plan for you and your partner (i.e., What you would be doing, where it would take place).

_____

_____

_____

Excitement Subscale (Malouff et al., 2012)

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the below statements, when considering the date that you have planned.

Very Slightly or Not at All (1)	A Little (2)	Moderately (3)	Quite a Bit (4)	Extremely (5)

Exciting

Interesting

Spontaneous

Passionate

Playful

Boring (Rev)

Adventurous

Sexual

Romantic

Items Added:

Different (Rev)

Familiar

Novel

Comforting (Rev)

Unfamiliar (Rev)

COVID-19 Questions

1. When people plan dates they normally have lots of options to choose from.

   Very slightly or not at all   A little   Moderately   Quite a bit   Extremely
          1   2   3   4   5

2. Given the current circumstances, to what extent did COVID-19 affect the date you planned?

   Very slightly or not at all   A little   Moderately   Quite a bit   Extremely
          1   2   3   4   5

3. To what extent was the excitement of the date you planned reduced because of COVID-19?

   Very slightly or not at all   A little   Moderately   Quite a bit   Extremely
          1   2   3   4   5

4. To what extent was the excitement of the date you planned increased because of COVID-19?

   Very slightly or not at all   A little   Moderately   Quite a bit   Extremely
          1   2   3   4   5

Relationship Assessment Scale (Hendrick, 1988) Adapted for present moment.

Please take a moment to think about your relationship with your partner. Please respond to the

following statements as truthfully and accurately as you can, and according to the scale below:

1. How satisfied were you with your relationship right now? (1 = not at all to 5 = extremely)

2. How well does your partner meet your needs right now? (1 = poorly to 5 = extremely well)

3. How good is your relationship compared to most right now? (1 = poor to 5 = excellent)

4. *How much do you wish you hadn't gotten into this relationship right now? (1 = not at all to 5 = extremely).

5. To what extent is your relationship meeting your original expectations right now? (1 = hardly at all to 5 = completely)

6. How much do you love your partner right now? (1 = not much, 5 = very much)

7. *How many problems are there in your relationship right now? (1 = very few, 5 = very many)

* = Reverse-coded

Personal Self-Expansion (Gordon & Luo, 2011)

Please answer each question according to the way your personally feel, using the following scale. Please be open and honest in your responding.

1 = strongly disagree to 6 = strongly agree
1. I enjoy gaining a more thorough understanding of something I already know.
2. I am always interested in finding new things to try.
3. *Once I have a basic understanding of something, I do not feel it is necessary to learn more about it.
4. I usually seek out new opportunities or experiences.
5. *Trying to learn more about something I already understand is usually not worth the effort.
6. *I generally prefer to have more familiarity and stability.
7. *Exploring something in depth is usually pretty tedious and boring.
8. Trying new things is important for me to stay happy.
9. *There are better ways to spend my time than trying to learn more about something I basically understand.
10. I place a lot of importance on experiencing new things.

* = reverse-coded