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## Expanding Who I Am: Validating the Self-Expansion Preference Scale

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### ABSTRACT

People's self-concepts are subject to change through various processes, one of which is self-expansion. Self-expansion is a motivation to increase one's self-concept through engaging in novel, exciting, and interesting activities or by taking on one's partner's qualities. Despite the plethora of research on self-expansion, there has not been much work on whether people vary in their desire to expand. This study validates a new measure, called the Self-Expansion Preference Scale, to examine people's differing motivation for self-expansion. The sample included 611 participants who responded to 24 items, 12 of which pertained to self-expansion, a desire to increase the self-concept, and 12 of which pertained to self-conservation, a desire to maintain the self-concept. After reverse coding the 12 conservator items, an exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis indicated that there was a single dominant factor of self-expansion. The single-factor scale positively correlated with a series of both convergent measures (e.g., openness to experience) and predictive measures (e.g., hedonic well-being). Ultimately, the Self-Expansion Preference Scale offers new insight into a well-established process in an easily administered format. Looking forward, it would be interesting to see the implications of the scale as applied to romantic relationships, where self-expansion was initially researched.

### ARTICLE HISTORY

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Every moment of one's existence, one is growing into more or retreating into less.

—Norman Mailer, 1959, p. 504



As Mailer's quote suggests, people have the opportunity to change and grow throughout their lives. One way in which people change is increasing their self-concept through self-expansion (Aron & Aron, 1986; Aron, Lewandowski, Mashek, & Aron, 2013). Self-expansion involves partaking in novel, interesting, and challenging experiences, or adopting the qualities of close others as one's own. Although previous research has shown the benefits of this process, it is unclear whether there is individual variability in the motivation to engage in self-expansion. If such variability exists, it would be useful to have a measure to examine this individual difference. The research reported here aims to fill this gap of this construct by assessing the variability in the motivation to self-expand with a new, validated, easily administered self-report measure of self-expansion preferences.<sup>1</sup>

### The self-concept and its expansion

The *self-concept* refers to a person's sense of identity and includes everything that a person claims as "me" or "mine" (James, 1890). It includes the characteristics, beliefs, preferences, physical attributes, social relationships, personal possessions, and subjective identity that constitute people's sense of who they are (e.g., Markus, 1977). Although the

self-concept is subjectively experienced as consistent over time, research demonstrates that it is continuously constructed through both personal and social experiences (e.g., Markus & Wurf, 1987; McConnell, 2011).

One way of altering the self-concept is through self-expansion—adding positive content to the self-concept (Aron & Aron, 1986; Mattingly, Lewandowski, & McIntyre, 2014). Self-expansion is typically theorized as an important individual motivation aimed at increasing the diversity and complexity of the self-concept by increasing one's novel resources, perspectives, and identities and incorporating that novelty into one's self-definitions (Aron et al., 2013). The motivation behind this is to be better able to achieve potential goals. When individuals add novel aspects to their self-concept, they might feel an increase in their abilities as well. By increasing the self-concept with new roles, knowledge, and experiences, a person might feel better equipped to cope with varied situations, including failure or rejection (Linville, 1987). Importantly, self-expansion is a cyclical process involving both an expansion and an integration phase. The expansion phase includes the motivation to take on novel aspects to diversify and increase complexity of one's self-concept. The integration phase includes taking these novel aspects and incorporating them into already existing self-schemas and beliefs (Aron & Aron, 1986; Aron et al., 2013). More recently, self-expansion has been described within a two-dimensional model of self-concept change (Mattingly et al., 2014). The other dimensions include the addition of

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<sup>1</sup>This study was not preregistered. If you would like to have access to the data and analyses, e-mail the first author. The new scale is available in the Appendix.

negative content (self-adulteration), the subtraction of positive content (self-contraction), and the subtraction of negative content (self-pruning). This article solely examines self-expansion, the addition of positive content.

## Sources of self-expansion

Self-expansion can occur either through unintentional or intentional pathways. An unintentional way self-expansion occurs is through taking on novel identities of a close other into one's own self-concept, whereas intentional self-expansion includes engaging in novel, exciting, and interesting activities, either independently or with a close other (Aron et al., 2013; Mattingly & Lewandowski, 2013; Mattingly & Lewandowski, 2014). Although this process can occur through relationships with close others such as friends (e.g., Richman, Slotter, Gardner, & DeWall, 2015; Tomlinson, Hughes, Lewandowski, Aron, & Geyer, 2018), romantic partners are the most common sources of self-expansion, as they represent an especially close type of relationship among adults (Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992).

With regard to unintentional self-expansion, people often take on aspects of close others as their own, frequently with very little shared experience (Aron et al., 2013). In the beginning of a romantic relationship, people often experience rapid self-expansion. The process of falling in love itself is self-expanding because it is a naturally exciting time filled with novelty (Aron, Paris, & Aron, 1995). During this time, people's self-concept literally expands to include more non-redundant self-descriptors or attributes. People also experience an increase in self-esteem and self-efficacy as a result of their expanded self-concept (Aron et al., 1995). This seems to occur without even the intention of taking on one's partner's qualities as one's own. It is a more natural by-product of falling in love. Even in the absence of shared experiences, people can spontaneously self-expand, adopting the characteristics of even a potential romantic partner as their own due to their motivation to affiliate with the desired romantic target (e.g., Slotter & Gardner, 2009). Importantly, adopting the attributes of another person into one's own self-concept appears to happen largely without people's full awareness. Integration of novel attributes from both ongoing and desired romantic partners occurs on both self-report and reaction-time-based measures (e.g., Aron, Aron, Tudor, & Nelson, 1991; Slotter & Gardner, 2009) and emerges in the absence of self-presentational pressures (e.g., Richman et al., 2015). Thus, it appears that the motivation to expand the self-concept predicts people seeking out new attributes and identities to include as their own, even without intentional processing.

A more intentional way that people engage in self-expansion is by partaking in novel, interesting, and challenging activities (e.g., Aron et al., 2013). This type of self-expansion can occur individually by people doing these types of activities on their own, or in the context of close relationships (Mattingly & Lewandowski, 2013). Individually, people can engage in these tasks and also experience increases in the size of their self-concept (Mattingly & Lewandowski, 2013).

This coincides with the results found in the context of romantic relationships, where people also experience these benefits (Aron et al., 1995). Whereas taking on the qualities of one's partner often occurs by just being with one's partner, individual and relational self-expansion involving these types of activities often have more intentional planning and effort (Aron, Norman, Aron, McKenna, & Heyman, 2000).

In dyadic relationships, engaging in novel activities together encourages self-expansion among both friends and romantic dyads (Richman et al., 2015; Tomlinson et al., 2018). In ongoing romantic relationships, a person might engage in novel, challenging, and interesting tasks with his or her partner, which appears to be beneficial to maintaining relationship satisfaction (Aron & Aron, 1986). For example, partners might take a cooking class together and learn how to make a soufflé, something neither partner has done before. In this circumstance, partners intentionally engage in an activity with the goal of trying something novel. It seems that this can be a way to supplement self-expansion when we have taken on our partners' qualities and need a new source of novelty, interest, and excitement.

## Benefits of self-expansion

Previous research has established that people can and do expand their self-concepts to adopt new characteristics and attributes, either through engaging in novel activities on their own, or through adopting characteristics from and engaging in novel activities with a close other such as a romantic partner (Aron et al., 2013). Why does it matter whether or not people self-expand? Generally speaking, experiencing self-expansion predicts a variety of well-being outcomes for both individuals (Mattingly & Lewandowski, 2013) and for their relationships (Aron et al., 2013).

Partaking in self-expanding activities independently leads people to exert more effort in both cognitive and physical pursuits and experience more self-efficacy (Mattingly & Lewandowski, 2013). Increasing one's self-concept through self-expansion creates a more effective self (Aron & Aron, 1986; Mattingly & Lewandowski, 2014), perhaps because when self-expansion occurs, the self-concept not only gains more characteristics, but the gains are diversified among several different areas. People feel better able to accomplish tasks because there are more aspects to who they are and what those aspects can achieve. For example, if a person broadens his or her self-concept by taking a French cooking class and now sees himself or herself as a cook, that person's self-efficacy for making Mexican cuisine should be stronger. Self-expansion might also bring individuals closer to achieving their ideal selves, reducing their self-discrepancy and difference between actual and ideal selves (e.g., Markus, 1977). Additionally, individual self-expansion is linked with flow, the positive subjective experience of absorption in a difficult activity (e.g., Graham, 2008). These findings indicate that engaging in self-expansion might increase people's motivation for and engagement in subsequent tasks.

Individual self-expansion has also been linked to other, practical beneficial outcomes. In the workplace, commitment

and job satisfaction are positively related to self-expansion, whereas the loss of a self-expanding job predicts negative outcomes such as decreased self-esteem (McIntyre, Mattingly, Lewandowski, & Simpson, 2014). Self-expansion also helps individuals abstain from smoking nicotine; participants who engaged in more self-expanding tasks had a greater number of days withholding from smoking (Xu, Floyd, Westmaas, & Aron, 2010).

Self-expansion clearly confers benefits for people when pursued in independent contexts. However, self-expansion also benefits people's relationships, and thus their individual well-being, when pursued in the context of close relational bonds. Indeed, relationship quality is one of the most crucial social factors in predicting people's psychological, as well as physical, health and well-being (e.g., Robles, Slatcher, Trombello, & McGinn, 2014). Given these findings, relationship quality is an important factor in predicting people's health and well-being and understanding factors that promote relationship quality is just as crucial. Self-expansion serves as one such relationship-promoting factor.

Perceiving one's relationship as self-expanding is correlated with greater perceptions of relationship quality (e.g., Aron et al., 2000) as well as greater passionate and companionate love (Mattingly et al., 2014). Researchers also have discovered that daily partner self-expansion is related to higher sexual desire, and thus higher relationship satisfaction (Muise et al., 2018). Taken together, these findings indicate that it is not just spending time together that increases relationship satisfaction, but participating in novel, self-expanding activities that bring a spark back to relationships.

Self-expansion not only helps people to gain positive outcomes, but also helps them to avoid negative ones. In long-term relationships, boredom is a frequent issue that negatively affects closeness and satisfaction (Tsapelas, Aron, & Orbach, 2009). One possible solution to boredom is engaging in self-expanding activities with one's partner. When relationships are lacking in self-expansion, people might begin to look elsewhere for this opportunity (VanderDrift, Lewandowski, & Agnew, 2011). However, increased self-expansion in one's relationship buffers against the susceptibility to infidelity (Lewandowski & Ackerman, 2006). Finally, we see that people whose relationships lack in self-expansion do not experience the same distress during breakup that those with a highly self-expanding relationship experience (Lewandowski & Bizzoco, 2007; Tashiro & Frazier, 2003).

Taken together, self-expansion is a clearly advantageous process. It confers a variety of benefits to people's health and well-being, both directly via self-efficacy and indirectly via enhancing their romantic relationships. However, despite self-expansion's benefits, there has been some indication that individuals' self-expansion motivation is not uniformly high.

### Individual differences in the preference to self-expand

Self-expansion has been described as a universally motivating principle (Aron & Aron, 1986). However, there does

seem to be some variability in how much people want to self-expand (e.g., Emery, Walsh, & Slotter, 2015). Recent research on self-expansion and self-concept clarity demonstrates that not all people want to engage in self-expansion at all times (Emery et al., 2015). Self-concept clarity is defined as how clearly one views his or her identity and how well one knows who he or she is (Campbell et al., 1996). In the first study, less self-concept clarity was relationally linked to a reduced desire to self-expand by not taking on attributes of a desired romantic partner (Emery et al., 2015). In a second study, participants experienced an experimental manipulation where their experience of self-concept clarity was temporarily dropped by considering aspects of their self-concept that were conflicting. Compared to control participants, those with reduced self-concept clarity chose to engage in less self-expansion by not taking on the attributes of a desired partner. These findings suggest that some people might not be as interested in self-expansion as others. The research reported here sought to test this idea. If self-expansion motivation varies across people, and self-expansion is linked to a host of beneficial outcomes for individuals, it is important to have a way of assessing this variability in preference for self-expansion.

In previous research, the measure used to examine self-expansion has been the Self-Expansion Questionnaire (Lewandowski & Aron, 2002). This measure is a 14-item Likert scale questionnaire that ascertains how much a person's romantic partner offers self-expanding opportunities. Although this scale measures individuals' current relational self-expansion experience, it fails to determine the degree to which an individual desires that level of expansion. The Personal Expansion Questionnaire (Gordon & Luo, 2011) examined self-expansion at the individual level as well. The authors altered the definition of self-expansion to one that excluded excitement and included augmentation, or expanding in a familiar area. Their measure sought to understand these two facets at an individual level. Where our measure differs is offering a questionnaire that (a) examines whether there is variation in the desire to self-expand, and (b) maintains the features of self-expansion—novelty, interest, and excitement (Aron et al., 2013). Because there appear to be differences in the degree to which people are motivated to self-expand, it is important to have a measure that captures that variation. Currently, no such measure exists; thus, developing such a measure is the goal of this work.

### Overview of this research

In this research, we aimed to develop a measure capturing people's motivation or preference to engage in self-expansion, versus their motivation to have their self-concept remain constant or to engage in self-conservation. We believe that the preference to self-expand can be described by examining people's desire to engage in this process either through unintentional or intentional means. A high desire to self-expand would encompass wanting to increase and diversify the self-concept through novel, interesting, and exciting experiences. Conversely, a low desire to self-expand

would indicate a preference to conserve the self-concept in its current state. Self-conservation encompasses the desire to maintain one's self-concept by engaging in familiar, routine, and comfortable activities. To the extent there is variability in self-expansion preferences, those individual differences have not been studied. Thus, we sought to create a brief, face-valid, easily administered self-report measure assessing this variation.

This study had three main goals. First, we sought to develop a brief, easily administered measure of people's desire for self-expansion, which we called of the Self-Expansion Preference Scale. Second, we examined the reliability and factor structure of the scale. Finally, we related the Self-Expansion Preference Scale to a series of convergent measures and hypothetically related outcome measures to test the convergent and predictive validity of the scale.

## Method

### Participants

We collected data from 611 participants in this study via two separate subsamples. The first subsample included data from 162 participants collected from May 2017 to July 2017. The second subsample included data from 449 participants collected from August 2017 to September 2017. In both subsamples, participants were paid \$1.00 for their participation through Amazon's Mechanical Turk. We originally collected 640 participants' data but discarded data from 24 participants for failing a predetermined data quality check (did not select "I will provide my best answers") and 5 participants for missing data points.

In the first subsample, 80.2% were White. There were 102 females (63.0%) and 60 males (37.0%). The average age was 41.68 years old ( $SD = 12.34$ , range = 21–73). In the second subsample, 77.1% were White. There were 257 females (57.2%), 191 males (42.5%), and 1 other (0.2%). The average age was 36.67 years old ( $SD = 11.39$ , range = 18–99). When examining the demographics between both subsamples, there was one significant difference. There was a significant difference with age, such that Subsample A's mean age was significantly higher than Subsample B's,  $t(608) = 4.70$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [2.92, 7.11]. However, there was no significant difference between the gender proportions,  $\chi^2(2) = 1.90$ ,  $p = .39$ , or ethnicity proportions,  $\chi^2(4) = 5.22$ ,  $p = .27$ . Due to the similarity of Subsample A and B methods and demographics, we collapsed the two samples for the rest of the analyses.

### Procedure

Both subsamples took part in surveys online via Amazon's Mechanical Turk. Following informed consent, participants completed the newly developed Self-Expansion Preference Scale followed by a series of additional questionnaires. They were allowed to skip any questions they did not feel like answering. The 5 participants eliminated for missing data points had skipped more than half of the questionnaires.

Once they completed the surveys, participants received the debriefing and payment.

There was a slight difference in methodology across the subsamples. For Subsample B, directly before the Self-Expansion Preference Scale, participants were randomly assigned to either respond to a prompt asking them to describe their last trip to the grocery store (control), aspects of themselves that make them feel certain about who they are (certainty condition), or aspects of themselves that make them feel uncertain about who they are (uncertainty condition). This manipulation was used to alter their self-concept clarity. There was a significant difference between conditions on self-concept clarity,  $F(2, 446) = 16.68$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [4.90, 5.17]. The uncertainty condition was significantly lower than both the control,  $t(446) = 4.29$ ,  $p < .001$ , and certainty conditions,  $t(446) = 5.54$ ,  $p < .001$ . There was no significant difference between the control and certainty condition,  $t(446) = -1.53$ ,  $p = .13$ . Although self-concept clarity was successfully reduced in the uncertainty condition, the self-concept clarity manipulation had no effect on the Self-Expansion Preference Scale,  $F(2, 446) = .21$ ,  $p = .81$ , 95% CI [4.06, 4.23]. Originally, we planned to use the manipulation to understand whether reducing self-concept clarity was one way to manipulate self-expansion preferences. However, once we saw the manipulation in Subsample B did not influence the Self-Expansion Preference scale, we moved to combine them for this article.

### Measures

As stated previously, the central goal of this research was to create a brief, easily employed measure of people's preferences for more, versus less, self-expanding experiences. Stated differently, we wished to create a questionnaire assessing people's desire to engage in activities and experiences that promoted expansion of their identity and abilities via new attributes, roles, experiences, and so on, versus activities and experiences that promoted self-conservation of their identity to remain as is.

Thus, to assess preferences for self-expansion, we developed a 24-item Likert scale in which participants rate the items on a scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree;  $\alpha = .94$ ). The goal was to include face valid items that assessed a preference for novelty and self-expansion, called the self-expansion subscale. We also included items to measure the inverse, a preference for familiarity and conservation of the existing self-concept, called the self-conservation subscale. The self-expansion subscale includes 12 items such as, "I embrace the opportunity to do things I've never done before." The self-conservation subscale includes 12 items such as, "I am a person who prefers a lot of familiarity in my life." See the Appendix for the complete measure. We presented scale items to participants in a randomized order; however, the numbers used to identify particular items in this article correspond to the numbers in the Appendix.

As these two subscales, theoretically, should be inversely related—that is, a person prefers greater self-expansion and



less self-conservation, or vice versa—the final version of the scale reverse scored the self-conservation items and created an overall average score for participants such that higher scores on the composite scale indicate a stronger preference for self-expansion and lower scores indicate a weaker preference for self-expansion. Participants also responded to a forced-choice question that asked whether they identified as a self-expander or self-conserver. We believed that those who scored higher on the Self-Expansion Preference Scale would be more likely to consider the self-expander definition most descriptive of the self, whereas those who scored lower on the scale would be more likely to consider the self-conserver definition most descriptive of the self. We used this as an additional check that our scale was measuring what we hoped it would, and a potential shorter form of the measure that researchers could more easily incorporate into longitudinal research. We discuss the reliability and factor structure of the scale later.

### **Convergent validity measures**

Self-expansion has been described as a motivation to engage in novel, interesting, and challenging experiences (Aron et al., 2013). However, there has not been much work regarding how self-expansion relates to various measures of theoretically related constructs. We believed that due to the nature of self-expansion, if our scale accurately captured this construct, it would positively relate to certain measures such as sensation-seeking, ego identity strength, and personality facets such as openness to experience, stability, and extraversion. Because self-expansion affects the self-concept, we thought it would also be important to look at self-concept malleability. As our scale is new, we wanted to see how it related to these various constructs.

#### **Sensation-seeking (Zuckerman, 1979)**

This measure includes 40 items. There are four subscales, including thrill and adventure seeking (“I sometimes like to do things that are a little frightening”;  $\alpha = .79$ ), experience seeking (“I like to explore a strange city or section of town myself, even if it means getting lost”;  $\alpha = .51$ ), disinhibition (“I like ‘wild’ uninhibited parties”;  $\alpha = .72$ ), and susceptibility to boredom (“I get bored seeing the same old faces”;  $\alpha = .60$ ).

#### **Ten-Item Personality Inventory (Gosling, Rentfrow, & Swann, 2003)**

This measure includes 10 items with five subscales that measure the main personality facets including extraversion (“Extraverted, enthusiastic”;  $\alpha = .76$ ), openness to experience (“Open to new experiences; complex”;  $\alpha = .53$ ), agreeableness (“Sympathetic, warm”;  $\alpha = .56$ ), conscientiousness (“Dependable, self-disciplined”;  $\alpha = .58$ ), and stability (“Calm, emotionally stable”;  $\alpha = .76$ ). The possible low reliabilities might be due to only having two questions per subscale.

#### **Big Five Inventory (John & Srivastava, 1999)**

This measure includes 44 items with five subscales that measure the facets of personality including extraversion (“Is talkative”;  $\alpha = .88$ ), openness to experience (“Is original, comes up with new ideas”;  $\alpha = .86$ ), agreeableness (“Has a forgiving nature”;  $\alpha = .83$ ), conscientiousness (“Does a thorough job”;  $\alpha = .87$ ), and neuroticism (“Is depressed, blue”;  $\alpha = .89$ ).

#### **Ego Identity Strength (Tan, Kendis, Fine, & Porac, 1977)**

This is a 12-item measure of identity strength (“When I daydream, it is primarily about my past experiences” or “When I daydream, it is primarily about the future and what it has in store for me”;  $\alpha = .59$ ).

#### **Self-Concept Malleability (Slotter & Lucas, 2013)**

This measure has 10 items with two subscales that examine how flexible one’s self-concept is. There is a self subscale (“I feel like a different person in my romantic relationships compared to when I am single”;  $\alpha = .86$ ) and a partner subscale (“In romantic relationships, my partners tend to take on the worldviews or opinions that are important to me”;  $\alpha = .88$ ).

#### **Need for Cognition (Cacioppo, Petty, & Kao, 1984)**

This is an 18-item measure rated on a scale that measures the extent to which people enjoy pushing their thought processes (“I prefer complex to simple problems”;  $\alpha = .95$ ).

#### **Personal Growth Scale (Ryff, 1989)**

This is a 9-item scale measuring a person’s interest in personal growth (“I think it is important to have new experiences that challenge how you think about yourself and the world”;  $\alpha = .88$ ).

### **Predictive validity measures**

Self-expansion has been noted to have many benefits for individuals and relationships. For individual benefits, it has been linked to self-efficacy (Mattingly & Lewandowski, 2013), self-esteem (Aron et al., 1995), and self-concept clarity (Emery et al., 2015) to name a few. We believe that those who score high on the Self-Expansion Preference Scale will be motivated to engage in more actual self-expansion, which should encourage well-being outcomes. With this assumption in mind, we thought our new scale would positively relate to both hedonic and eudaimonic well-being as well as negatively relate to stress and depressive symptomology. Because actually engaging in self-expansion has been related to a series of well-being measures, we took a variety of individual well-being measures to examine whether being motivated to self-expansion would relate to similar well-being outcomes.

### **Satisfaction with Life (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985)**

This is a 5-item measure that examines how happy people are with their lives ("In most ways, my life is close to ideal";  $\alpha = .94$ ).

### **Psychological Well-Being (Ryff & Keyes, 1995)**

This is an 18-item scale assessing eudaimonic well-being ( $\alpha = .89$ ). There are six subscales: autonomy ("I judge myself by what I think is important, not by the values of what others think is important";  $\alpha = .63$ ), environmental mastery ("In general, I feel I am in charge of the situation in which I live";  $\alpha = .69$ ), personal growth ("For me, life has been a continuous process of learning, changing, and growth";  $\alpha = .69$ ), positive relationships with others ("People would describe me as a giving person, willing to share my time with others";  $\alpha = .64$ ), purpose in life ("Some people wander aimlessly through life, but I am not one of them";  $\alpha = .39$ ), and self-acceptance ("When I look at the story of my life, I am pleased with how things have turned out";  $\alpha = .78$ ).

### **Depressive Symptomology (Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy, & Sugarman, 1999)**

This is an 8-item scale measuring a person's level of depression ("I am so sad; sometimes I wonder why I bother to go on living";  $\alpha = .93$ ).

### **Perceived Stress (Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983)**

This is a 4-item scale that measures how stressed people felt in the last month ("In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?";  $\alpha = .82$ ).

### **Health Habits (Finkel, Slotter, & Luchies, 2009)**

This is a 14-item scale measuring people's healthy versus unhealthy choices ("I eat at least three servings of vegetables a day";  $\alpha = .88$ ).

### **Self-Concept Clarity (Campbell et al., 1996)**

This is a 10-item scale measuring how clearly defined a person feels his or her self-concept is ("I seldom experience conflict between the different aspects of my personality";  $\alpha = .94$ ).

### **Self-Esteem (Rosenberg, 1965)**

This is a 10-item scale measuring dispositional self-esteem ("On the whole, I am satisfied with myself";  $\alpha = .92$ ).

### **Self-Efficacy (Sherer et al., 1982)**

This is a 17-item scale measuring a person's belief that he or she can accomplish goals and tasks ("When I make plans, I am certain I can make them work";  $\alpha = .94$ ).

**Table 1.** Significant correlations among the demographic variables.

Scale name	Gender correlation (1 = male, 2 = female)	M	SD	Scale points
1. Self-Expansion Preference	-.13**	4.09	.99	1-7
2. Age	.12**	38.00	11.85	Open-ended
3. Life Satisfaction	.12**	4.36	1.69	1-7
4. Sensation-Thrill	-.17**	3.96	2.88	Forced choice
5. Sensation-Disinhibition	-.15**	3.86	2.51	Forced choice
6. Sensation-Boredom	-.26**	3.03	2.11	Forced choice
7. TIPI-Agreeableness	.18**	5.34	1.34	1-7
8. TIPI-Conscientious	.10*	5.57	1.20	1-7
9. TIPI-Stability	-.14**	4.91	1.56	1-7
10. Cognition	-.18**	3.31	.84	1-5
11. Malleability-Self	-.10*	3.54	1.31	1-7
12. Malleability-Partner	-.09*	3.68	1.17	1-7
13. BFI-agreeableness	.19**	3.70	.74	1-5
14. BFI-neuroticism	.14**	2.64	.95	1-5
Scale name	Age correlation	M	SD	Scale points
1. Self-Concept Clarity	.27**	5.09	1.43	1-7
2. Self-Esteem	.18**	3.05	.68	1-4
3. Self-Efficacy	.24**	5.02	1.20	1-7
4. Personal Growth	.13**	4.38	.98	1-6
5. Sensation-Thrill	-.11**	3.96	2.88	Forced choice
6. Sensation-Disinhibition	-.20**	3.86	2.51	Forced choice
7. Sensation-Boredom	-.18**	3.03	2.11	Forced choice
8. TIPI-Agreeableness	.22**	5.34	1.34	1-7
9. TIPI-Conscientious	.21**	5.57	1.20	1-7
10. TIPI-Stability	.17**	4.91	1.56	1-7
11. Ego Identity Strength	.18**	6.65	2.48	Forced choice
12. Malleability-Self	-.10**	3.54	1.31	1-7
13. Malleability-Partner	-.14**	3.68	1.17	1-7
14. BFI-Agreeable	.22**	3.70	.74	1-5
15. BFI-Neuroticism	-.18**	2.64	.95	1-5
16. BFI-Openness	.17**	3.54	.77	1-5
17. BFI-Conscientious	.26**	3.88	.75	1-5
18. Stress	-.14**	1.96	1.00	0-4
19. Eudaimonic Well-Being	.17**	4.85	.97	1-7
20. Depression	-.11**	2.90	1.41	1-7

Note.  $N = 611$ . All analyses are two-tailed. TIPI = Ten-Item Personality Inventory; BFI = Big Five Inventory.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

### **Auxiliary demographic measures**

Participants indicated their gender, age, and ethnicity in fill-in-the-blank-fields.<sup>2</sup> See Table 1 for significant correlations between gender, age, and the other scales.

## **Results**

Except where noted, we performed all statistical analyses in IBM SPSS Statistics 25.

### **Scale reliability**

We first examined the reliability of the self-expansion and self-conservation subscales separately, before reverse scoring the self-conservation items for inclusion in the composite measure. The self-expansion subscale demonstrated a Cronbach's alpha of .95, and removing any of the individual items from the subscale reduced reliability. Similarly, the self-conservation subscale demonstrated a Cronbach's alpha

<sup>2</sup>We tested to see if the demographics moderated any of the results. Ethnicity and gender were not significant moderators. Age was not a consistent moderator.

of .90, and removing any of the individual items from the subscale reduced reliability. Additionally, as predicted, the two subscales were inversely related,  $r = -.49$ ,  $p < .001$ . Thus, we reverse scored the self-conservation items as planned and created an overall composite measure, combining the two subscales, of self-expansion preferences.

We next examined the overall reliability of the composite measure, which included the self-expansion subscale and the reverse scored self-conservation subscale. The composite Self-Expansion Preference Scale exhibited a Cronbach's alpha of .94, and removing any of the individual items from the scale reduced overall reliability. Thus, we retained the full 24-item measure. We also found that participants who chose self-expander ( $M = 4.78$ ,  $SD = .68$ ) on the forced choice scored significantly higher on the scale than those who chose self-conserver ( $M = 3.45$ ,  $SD = .79$ ),  $t(609) = 22.32$ ,  $p < .001$ . The forced choice (1 = *self-conserver*, 2 = *self-expander*) was positively correlated with the Self-Expansion Preference Scale as well ( $r = .67$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

### Scale factor structure

To assess the Self-Expansion Preference Scale's factor structure, we divided our entire sample into two subsamples by randomly selecting approximately half of our 611 cases for use in an exploratory factor analysis ( $n = 308$ ) using a random number generator. The roughly second half of our 611 cases then substantiated the results of this exploratory factor analysis in a confirmatory factor analysis ( $n = 303$ ). There was no overlap between the two subsamples, and we only used this division when determining factor structure. We performed reliability analyses and scale correlations with other measures on the entire 611-person sample.

### Exploratory factor analysis

We conducted a principal components analysis (PCA), combined with a parallel analysis and a Velicer's minimum average partial (MAP) test (Wood, Tataryn, & Gorsuch, 1996; Zwick & Velicer, 1986) to determine the number of factors present within our composite scale and the factor loading of each scale item onto those factors. The initial PCA, conducted on a randomly selected subsample of 308 participants, revealed three factors with eigenvalues greater than 1. Factor 1 had an eigenvalue of 11.04 and accounted for 46.02% of the variance, Factor 2 had an eigenvalue of 3.75 and accounted for 15.61% of the variance, and Factor 3 had an eigenvalue of 1.59 and accounted for 6.61% of the variance. Both the parallel analysis and MAP procedures indicated that the third factor did not contribute meaningfully to explaining the variance in the data, and that the optimal solution for the Self-Expansion Preference Scale was a two-factor solution.

We next examined the scale item loadings onto each of these two factors (see Table 2). As evidenced by these item loadings, all 24 items on the Self-Expansion Preference Scale loaded onto the first, dominant factor that emerged in the PCA. Loadings onto the second factor were split between the non-reverse-coded and reverse-coded items. Given the

**Table 2.** Exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis item loadings.

Scale item	Exploratory PCA Factor 1 loading	Exploratory PCA Factor 2 loading	Confirmatory analysis regression weight
Self-Expansion 1	.803	-.252	.445
Self-Expansion 2	.740	-.365	.470
Self-Expansion 3	.784	-.342	.417
Self-Expansion 4	.773	-.246	.405
Self-Expansion 5	.777	-.207	.387
Self-Expansion 6	.633	.021	.214*
Self-Expansion 7	.777	-.388	.441
Self-Expansion 8	.693	-.370	.386
Self-Expansion 9	.766	-.286	.411
Self-Expansion 10	.766	-.395	.452
Self-Expansion 11	.828	-.307	.424
Self-Expansion 12	.773	-.341	.399
Self-Conservation (r) 1	.501	.692	.070*
Self-Conservation (r) 2	.539	.655	.120*
Self-Conservation (r) 3	.608	.633	.296
Self-Conservation (r) 4	.595	.646	.290
Self-Conservation (r) 5	.648	.577	.393
Self-Conservation (r) 6	.637	.196	.752
Self-Conservation (r) 7	.723	.218	.838
Self-Conservation (r) 8	.524	.450	.222*
Self-Conservation (r) 9	.537	.053	.729
Self-Conservation (r) 10	.489	.428	.211*
Self-Conservation (r) 11	.565	.099	.885
Self-Conservation (r) 12	.598	.222	.651

*Note.* The exploratory principal components analysis (PCA) factor analysis included 308 participants from our overall sample, wherein the confirmatory factor analysis included the remaining 303 participants from the sample.

high reliability of the overall scale and this pattern of item loadings, we interpreted these findings to indicate a dominant single-factor solution of self-expansion preference. Higher numbers on the scale (after reverse coding where relevant) indicate a greater interest in or preference for self-expansion.

The second factor, on the other hand, emerged as a latent measurement factor (Marsh, Scalas, & Nagengast, 2010), meaning that participants answered non-reverse-coded and reverse-coded items slightly differently. Questionnaires widely used in psychology can be affected by distortions associated with method or measurement effects. These method effects are due to the variance linked to measurement procedures instead of the constructs under investigation and can lead to biased interpretations by distorting links among variables (Bagozzi, 1993). Due to the issues with response bias in self-report measures, many researchers use both non-reverse-coded and reverse-coded items to address the same underlying construct, in this case the preference for self-expansion. This reduces response bias, but can introduce these method effects, referred to as latent measurement factors (e.g., Billiet & McClelland, 2000). Thus, this second emergent factor represented a method effect in our data, and did not contribute to our theoretical understanding of participants' responses to the items on the Self-Expansion Preference Scale.

### Confirmatory factor analysis

We next sought to substantiate the results of the exploratory factor analysis with a confirmatory factor analysis conducted on the remaining 303 participants whose data were not used



for the exploratory factor analysis. We conducted this analysis using the SPSS Amos 25 package and employed a maximum likelihood approach. We loaded each of our observed scale items onto the latent variable of self-expansion preference. To account for the latent measurement factor observed in the exploratory factor analysis, we allowed for the latent error terms for each of our observed non-reverse-scored scale items to be intercorrelated with each other. We did the same for the latent error terms for the observed reverse-scored scale items (Model 3; Marsh et al., 2010). Thus, we examined the item loadings and model fit for our single-factor solution, accounting for the latent measurement factor introduced by the observed method effect.

Overall, the specific model in our confirmatory factory analysis fit the data well (comparative fit index [CFI] = .973, root mean square error of approximation [RMSEA] = .065, Akaike's information criterion [AIC] = 792.12, Bayesian information criterion [BIC] = 1590.76). It is worth noting that we also conducted a version of our model that did not include the error term intercorrelations associated with the latent measurement factor for comparison's sake, but this model did not fit our data well (CFI = .79, RMSEA = .17, AIC = 2399.69, BIC = 2619.13). As presented in Table 2, which shows the standardized regression weights for each scale item, the majority of the items loaded onto the latent variable of self-expansion preference quite well. However, there were several items that modification indexes suggested might be dropped from the model (noted with an asterisk). Thus, we repeated our confirmatory analysis removing these five items. Although removing these items eliminated the scale items with the lowest correlations with our key latent variable, doing so substantially reduced model fit (CFI = .68, RMSEA = .15, AIC = 3099.42, BIC = 3104.87). As such, we opted to retain the full, 24-item version of the Self-Expansion Preference Scale.

### Scale correlations with convergent measures

We examined how the Self-Expansion Preference Scale correlated with a series of convergent measures (see Table 3). We found significant correlations with all four subscales of Sensation-Seeking, Personal Growth, relevant subscales on the Ten-Item Personality Inventory and Big Five Inventory, Ego Identity Strength, Need for Cognition, and Self-Concept Malleability. We found that greater self-expansion preferences relate to greater sensation-seeking, personal growth, extraversion, stability, and openness to experience, ego identity strength, and need for cognition. Also, greater self-expansion preferences relate to reduced self-concept malleability for both the self and partner subscales. Overall, these analyses indicate that the motivation to self-expand is related to other already validated measures. The associations among these variables, although significant, were for the most part moderate, indicating that the Self-Expansion Preference Scale accounts for unique variance in responding beyond its shared variance with these convergent measures.

**Table 3.** Correlations among the Self-Expansion Preference Scale, convergent, and predictive measures.

Scale name	Self-Expansion Preference Scale correlation	M	SD	Scale points
<b>Convergent measures</b>				
1. Self-Expansion Preferences	—	4.09	.99	1–7
2. Sensation–Thrill Seeking	.49**	3.96	2.88	Forced choice
3. Sensation–Experience	.45**	4.92	2.07	Forced choice
4. Sensation–Disinhibition	.33**	3.86	2.51	Forced choice
5. Sensation–Boredom	.36**	3.03	2.11	Forced choice
6. Need for Cognition	.62**	3.31	.84	1–5
7. TIPI–Extraversion	.38**	3.54	1.73	1–7
8. TIPI–Agreeableness	.06	5.34	1.34	1–7
9. TIPI–Stability	.34**	4.91	1.56	1–7
10. TIPI–Openness	.62**	4.95	1.37	1–7
11. TIPI–Conscientious	.04	5.57	1.20	1–7
12. BFI–Extraversion	.41**	2.89	.92	1–5
13. BFI–Agreeableness	.14**	3.70	.74	1–5
14. BFI–Neuroticism	–.37**	2.64	.95	1–5
15. BFI–Openness	.59**	3.52	.77	1–5
16. BFI–Conscientious	.09*	3.88	.75	1–5
17. Ego Identity Strength	.40**	6.65	2.48	Forced choice
18. Malleability–Self	–.09*	3.54	1.31	1–7
19. Malleability–Partner	–.08*	3.68	1.17	1–7
20. Personal Growth	.70**	4.38	.98	1–6
<b>Predictive measures</b>				
1. Self-Expansion Preference	—	4.09	.99	1–7
2. Life Satisfaction	.11**	4.36	1.69	1–7
3. Eudemonic Well-Being	.40**	4.85	.97	1–7
4. Depression	–.21**	2.90	1.41	1–7
5. Perceived Stress	–.19**	1.96	1.00	0–4
6. Health Habits	.30**	4.46	1.17	1–7
7. Self-Concept Clarity	.14**	5.09	1.43	1–7
8. Self-Esteem	.28**	3.05	.67	1–4
9. Self-Efficacy	.48**	5.02	1.20	1–7

Note.  $N = 611$ . All analyses are two-tailed. TIPI = Ten-Item Personality Inventory; BFI = Big Five Inventory.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

### Scale correlations with predictive measures

As predicted, the Self-Expansion Preference Scale correlated with a series of predictive measures as well, including Satisfaction with Life, Eudaimonic Well-Being, Depressive Symptomology, Perceived Stress, Health Habits, Self-Concept Clarity, Self-Esteem, and Self-Efficacy (see Table 3). We found that greater self-expansion preferences relate to greater life satisfaction, eudaimonic well-being, health, self-concept clarity, self-esteem, and self-efficacy. Also, greater self-expansion preferences relate to reduced depression and stress. These associations indicate that being higher in the motivation to self-expand is positively related to a series of well-being outcomes.<sup>3</sup>

As the only difference in methodology was the manipulation of self-concept clarity, as noted earlier, we wanted to take a closer look at these results in the two subsamples. In Subsample B, participants were randomly assigned to the control condition, the certainty condition, or the uncertainty condition. To ensure that Subsample A and Subsample B could be combined, we ran a series of partial correlations examining the effects of the manipulation on self-concept clarity and the Self-Expansion Preference Scale. We ran a

<sup>3</sup>At the request of a reviewer, we found all of the predictive measures and self-expansion preferences correlations remained significant, controlling for sensation-seeking and openness to experience.

partial correlation between Self-Concept Clarity and the Self-Expansion Preference Scale in Subsample B controlling for condition, and found there was still a significant relationship,  $r = .178$ ,  $p < .001$ . We also ran a partial correlation between Self-Concept Clarity and the Self-Expansion Preference Scale controlling for sample, and found there was a significant correlation,  $r = .148$ ,  $p < .001$ . These partial correlations indicate that the relationship between Self-Concept Clarity and Self-Expansion Preferences remains despite the different samples and condition. Due to this, we felt confident combining the subsamples across analyses.

## General discussion

This research aimed to develop a new, easily administered, self-report measure of self-expansion preferences. Self-expansion is the motivation to increase and diversify the self-concept by engaging in novel, interesting, and challenging activities or by adopting one's partner's resources, perspectives, and identities as one's own (e.g., Aron et al., 2013). Despite the benefits of this process, some research indicates that everyone might not be motivated to self-expand to the same extent. However, there was no preexisting measure to capture this individual difference. To fill this gap in the literature, we created the Self-Expansion Preference Scale.

Our scale consisted of 24 items, which included two subscales: 12 items to capture the motivation to expand the self, and 12 items to capture the motivation to conserve the existing self. Self-expansion was defined as the motivation to increase and diversify one's self-concept by engaging in novel, interesting, and challenging activities, whereas self-conservation was the motivation to maintain one's self-concept through engaging in familiar and routine activities. We believed, and confirmed, that the two subscales were inversely related. For this reason we reverse scored our self-conserving items to have a single factor. When examining our exploratory factor analysis, results showed a single dominant factor solution of self-expansion, indicating that greater scores on the scale do suggest higher preferences for self-expansion.

The Self-Expansion Preference Scale also correlated to a series of convergent measures. In particular the scale was positively correlated with all subscales for Sensation-Seeking, Ego Identity Strength, Need for Cognition, Personal Growth, and the Ten-Item Personality Inventory subscales Extraversion, Stability, and Openness. Due to self-expansion relating to people's natural curiosity and tendency to increase complexity, it follows that people who are high in this motivation would also be sensation-seekers, extraverted, and open to new experiences (Aron & Aron, 1986). Ego identity strength refers to a resiliency in who we are through adversity (Tan et al., 1977). A higher motivation for self-expansion might positively correlate with ego identity strength due to possible increased feelings of self-efficacy from engaging in self-expansion (Mattingly & Lewandowski, 2013). If we feel we are more able to accomplish a task, it serves that we feel stronger through trying times. Self-

expansion has also been linked to an increase in the self-concept's size (Aron et al., 1995; Mattingly & Lewandowski, 2014). People who want to take on new resources, perspectives, and identities should also desire a sense of growth. An increased desire to grow would likely produce more actual growth compared to someone who is less motivated.

Self-expansion has also been linked to greater effort on cognitive tasks following an expanding activity (Mattingly & Lewandowski, 2013). It is possible that wanting to self-expand activates a desire for increased cognitive functioning, which could be why we saw the positive relationship between need for cognition and self-expansion. Self-expansion preferences negatively correlated with self-concept malleability. A possible reason for this is as people build their self-concept through self-expansion, they might feel more certain with who they are, thus leading them to feel less likely to change for their partner. This finding might seem counterintuitive because one way to self-expand is by taking on a partner's characteristics. Further research is needed to understand the relationship between self-concept malleability and self-expansion.

The Self-Expansion Preference Scale also significantly correlated with a series of predictive measures. In particular, the scale positively correlated with self-esteem, self-efficacy, satisfaction with life, psychological well-being, and health habits. Previous research linked self-efficacy and self-expansion due to an increase in the self-concept (Aron et al., 1995; Mattingly & Lewandowski, 2013). The similar findings with our motivation scale are promising for the validity of our new measure. The Self-Expansion Preference Scale positively correlated with both Satisfaction With Life (hedonic well-being) and Psychological Well-Being (eudaimonic well-being). Self-expansion has previously been linked to increased self-efficacy and self-esteem (Aron et al., 1995), rewarding experiences (Xu et al., 2010), and better relationship quality (Aron et al., 2013). Therefore, it is possible that being motivated to self-expand leads to greater happiness and greater meaning in life. The Self-Expansion Preference Scale positively correlated with health habits and negatively correlated with depression and stress. This indicates that the motivation to self-expand positively relates to both mental and physical well-being. Because self-expansion has been linked to increased individual well-being outcomes such as self-esteem (Aron et al., 1995) and self-efficacy (Mattingly & Lewandowski, 2013), we thought having a greater desire to self-expand, and theoretically engaging in self-expansion, would result in decreased depression and stress in a subclinical population. Previous work hypothesized that increased self-expanding activities related to smoking abstinence because it could activate the pleasure center in the brain (Xu et al., 2010). It is possible, then, that self-expansion is doing something similar for reducing depression. It is also possible, though, that increased depression and stress dulls one's desire to self-expand. It would be interesting to further elucidate the relationship between these clinical outcomes and self-expansion. These results seem promising that our new scale captured people's motivation to self-expand.

### **Strengths and limitations**

This research possessed several notable strengths. Despite previous studies insinuating that there were individual differences in the motivation to self-expand, there was no measure to test if this was true. The Self-Expansion Preference Scale fills this gap by allowing for a greater understanding of this motivation. Due to the factor analysis, it is clear that this measure is a single-factor scale that examines greater nuances in the desire to self-expand. The results are promising due to the use of a large, diverse, online sample that should be more representative than a collegiate one. Further, this study opens up a whole new host of questions that can be examined about both individual and relational self-expansion.

As with any research, this work also has several limitations that should be addressed in future research endeavors. As this was examining a new scale, the study was purely correlational. It is unclear whether this scale will be useful in experimental settings, such as examining whether people's preferences for self-expansion are causally related in some way to the well-being outcomes that we examined here. Although it is unclear why, we also had some low reliabilities with our scales. Self-expansion relates to many relationship outcomes measures (Aron et al., 2013). Unfortunately, we did not collect participants' relationship status, so we cannot see whether being in a relationship would affect any of our results. Because the scale is new, it is imperative to test it in a wider variety of ways to see how useful it can be.

### **Implications and future directions**

As seen in previous research, self-expansion is beneficial to both the individual (Mattingly & Lewandowski, 2013) and to romantic relationships (Aron et al., 2013). In particular, we have seen how expanding the self-concept allows for greater diversity in who we are (Aron et al., 1995), which positively affects what we think we can accomplish (Mattingly & Lewandowski, 2013). Despite the benefits self-expansion offers, it was important to examine how widespread this process is—is self-expansion something that is desired equally by all people, or is there variability? For this reason, we created the Self-Expansion Preference Scale to examine individual differences in the motivation to self-expand. Because self-expansion is useful to both individuals and partners, it seems possible that this scale could be used to assess how similarity on this dimension between relationship partners affects their relational well-being. Another possible practical implication would be to use the scale to understand why some people feel less efficacious when entering a new undertaking in their lives. It is possible that when beginning something new (e.g., graduate school or a new job), some people who have a higher preference for self-expansion are able to think of the benefits of the novel experience, whereas those with a lower preference might feel overwhelmed with the prospect of changing their self-concept.

Another area where the Self-Expansion Preference Scale might be beneficial is within certain clinical settings. Previous research showed that self-expanding activities were

positively related to abstaining from smoking (Xu et al., 2010). Their reasoning included that because self-expansion activates similar pleasure centers in the brain as nicotine, the activities substituted for smoking a cigarette. It would be interesting moving forward to see how self-expansion plays a role in rehabilitation centers for addiction. Further, it seems imperative to examine this based on whether people have a preference to self-expand or not. In particular, this could be important so people do not feel lack of agency when trying to beat an addiction. However, as we found that self-expansion does relate to both hedonic and eudaimonic well-being, it might be possible to use self-expansion in clinical settings, while appreciating that people differ on this dimension.

Future directions should include further validating the Self-Expansion Preference Scale in differing areas including and beyond romantic relationships. Moving forward, it would be advantageous to see how self-expansion at an individual difference level would affect previous research. Another area of the self-expansion model is the cyclical nature of expanding and integrating. Future studies could confirm this aspect of the model by using the Self-Expansion Preference Scale longitudinally to measure fluctuations in people's preferences over time. This would further solidify or modify the self-expansion model. This would also give us greater insight into whether preference to self-expand is a more stable trait characteristic or if it is more a state characteristic based on situational factors. It would also be interesting to see people's motivation to self-expand based on whether they believe their partner will help them add or subtract positive or negative qualities from their self-concepts as described in the Mattingly et al. (2014) paper. Finally, although our results conceptually replicate previous self-expansion research, our new scale extends existing work by providing the first measure that examines an individual's motivation to self-expand, rather than their actual experience of self-expansion. Moving forward, it would be important to test whether those who have a higher motivation to self-expand actually engage in greater self-expansion and the potential consequences of unfulfilled desires for self-expansion.

### **Conclusion**

Self-expansion has long been associated with a wide range of positive outcomes, for individuals and for relationships (Aron et al., 2013). Consequently, there has been a tacit assumption that everyone shares an equal desire for self-expansion. As a result, potential individual differences have been ignored in the empirical literature. The development of the Self-Expansion Preference Scale aimed to fill this gap in the literature by providing a brief, easily administered survey for assessing individual differences in the desire or motivation to self-expand. To the extent there is variability in self-expansion preferences, having a measure to assess those individual differences will create a whole host of opportunities to better understand self-expansion processes, when the motivation for them varies, and the potential benefits and costs of desiring more versus less self-expansion.



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1. I enjoy doing new things.
  2. I like to learn new skills.
  3. I embrace the opportunity to do things I’ve never done before.
  4. I am always ready for the next adventure.
  5. I am happiest when engaging in new skills.
  6. I find doing the same activities all the time boring.
  7. I enjoy seeing the world from new perspectives.
  8. I think it’s important for my identity to evolve over time.
  9. I like people or situations that challenge me to think differently about myself.
  10. I enjoy adding new attributes or characteristics to my sense of who I am.
  11. I seek out things that allow me to think about the world in new ways.
  12. I embrace changes to who I am.
  13. I find familiarity comforting.
  14. I enjoy doing familiar activities.
  15. I am a person who prefers a lot of familiarity in my life.
  16. I find comfort in maintaining things the way they are.
  17. I am happiest engaging in skills that I already know how to do.
  18. I get overwhelmed when I have to do an activity I’ve never done before.
  19. I am someone who doesn’t like to change myself very much.
  20. I enjoy doing things that confirm my existing views of the world.
  21. I avoid perspectives that challenge the way I see myself.
  22. I like to maintain my identity by doing things that confirm it.
  23. I do not think adding new attributes or characteristics to my sense of self is important.
  24. I don’t like when people or situations force me to change who I am.

Which of these two options is more descriptive of you? (Please check one)

\_\_\_\_\_ Self-expander: A person who typically seeks to add to their sense of self. Someone who embraces new, challenging and interesting activities as opportunities to gain new knowledge, perspectives, and identities. A person who embraces challenges as ways to learn and grow.

Or

\_\_\_\_\_ Self-conserver: A person who typically seeks to maintain their sense of self. Someone who enjoys participating in familiar, well-known, and routine activities that confirm their perspectives and avoid changing the self. A person who finds comfort in maintaining things the way they are, enjoys routine, and familiar experiences.

## Appendix: Self-Expansion Preference Scale

Using the following scale, to what extent do you agree with each of the following:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree			Neutral			Strongly Agree