

TRAJECTORIES OF SELF-EXPANSION AND SEXUAL DESIRE IN THE EARLY YEARS
OF A RELATIONSHIP

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A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

GRADUATE PROGRAM IN PSYCHOLOGY
YORK UNIVERSITY
TORONTO, ONTARIO

JULY 2025

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Abstract

Sexual desire declines and is challenging to maintain after the initial “honeymoon phase” of a relationship. One promising factor for explaining the trajectory of desire is *self-expansion*—broadening one’s sense of self through novel and exciting experiences with a partner. The current study is the first to longitudinally track desire and self-expansion in early dating couples ($N = 170$ couples, relationship length = 3 - 15 months) to test whether higher self-expansion buffers against the typical declines in desire. Over the 18 months, desire and self-expansion declined then levelled off showing both linear and curvilinear effects. People who were generally higher in self-expansion, and at times when they felt higher self-expansion than usual, reported higher sexual desire, but this did not protect against declines in desire over time. For women specifically, partner’s self-expansion was associated with a boost in desire but also steeper declines. Implications for self-expansion theory and sexual desire maintenance are discussed.

Acknowledgements

This thesis would not have been possible without the invaluable support and generosity of several people, and it is my privilege to acknowledge them here.

First and foremost, I am deeply grateful to my supervisor and mentor, Dr. Amy Muise. Your unwavering encouragement, kindness, patience, and responsiveness have profoundly shaped my academic and personal growth. Your optimism, passion, and dedication to research have truly inspired me. It is an honour to work and learn alongside you.

My heartfelt thanks to my committee members: Dr. Emily Impett, your careful review, thoughtful advice, and detailed feedback have greatly strengthened this work. I am sincerely grateful for your dedication. Dr. Heather Prime and Dr. Cindel White, thank you for generously setting aside time to review my thesis and serve on my defence committee. I look forward to discussing my work with you.

Beyond my committee, I feel incredibly lucky to have shared this journey with my lab mates. Thank you for the pep talks, life chats, sanity checks, and jokes that left my face aching from laughter. To my friends outside the lab, my loudest cheerleaders—thank you for being prouder of this thesis than I am and for enthusiastically bragging on my behalf. I am touched by the way you celebrate me, and it means more than you know.

Finally, I want to express my profound gratitude to my mother for her tremendous love and support, whose felt presence has been vital to my perseverance.

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Introduction

Sexual desire plays a central role in both the formation and maintenance of romantic relationships. Early on, sexual desire helps initiate relationships (Berscheid & Reis, 1998; Birnbaum, 2018), and over time, it fosters satisfaction and commitment while reducing interest in alternative partners (Birnbaum & Muise, 2025). Yet desire is fragile—often declining after the initial “honeymoon phase,”—a period of heightened passion that typically lasts between 1 and 2.5 years (Tennov, 1979; Acker & Davis, 1992; Baumeister & Bratslavsky, 1999). Although some couples sustain high levels of desire even decades into their relationships (Acevedo & Aron, 2009), little is known about the factors that allow couples to maintain desire beyond the early, high-intensity phase.

Critically, few studies have tracked sexual desire longitudinally during the transition from early to more established relationships—precisely when desire tends to decline. One promising predictor of sustained desire is *self-expansion*: the experience of broadening one’s sense of self and worldview by including aspects of a partner and engaging in novel, exciting shared activities (Aron & Aron, 1986). In the current study, I followed couples from the early stages of their relationship ($M_{relationship\ length} = 9$ months) over an 18 - month period, capturing the transition out of the honeymoon phase. This design allowed me to assess the trajectories of both sexual desire and self-expansion as relationships evolved. I tested the predictions that, on average, both sexual desire and self-expansion would decline over time, and that couples who experienced higher levels of self-expansion would be buffered against the typical declines in desire—maintaining higher levels of sexual interest as their relationships matured.

Sexual Desire in Romantic Relationships

Sexual desire for a partner refers to the subjective experience of wanting to engage in sexual activity with a romantic partner (Prekatsounaki et al., 2022). Several prominent theories suggest that sexual desire is typically high in the early stages of relationships but tends to steeply decline over time (Acevedo & Aron, 2009; Aubin & Heiman, 2004; Birnbaum, 2018). People's perceptions of their own relationships align with this pattern. In a large U.S. sample of over 38,000 individuals in long-term relationships, people perceived their current relationships as less passionate (i.e., having lower desire) than the first six months of their relationship (Frederick et al., 2017). Consistent with these perceptions, desire tends to be lower in long-term relationships compared to newer ones (Graham et al., 2017; Murray & Milhausen, 2012; Prekatsounaki et al., 2019; Klusmann, 2002). In a large-scale British cross-sectional study of over 11,000 sexually active individuals, ranging from teenagers to older adults, low sexual desire—defined as a lack of interest in sex for at least three months in the past year (Graham et al., 2017)—was more common in relationships lasting more than one year compared to those less than a year in duration, but only among women (Graham et al., 2017). Other cross-sectional studies have replicated this pattern, showing that longer relationship duration is consistently linked with lower sexual desire among women, but not men. In a study of undergraduate women in dating relationships, each additional month of relationship duration predicted a small but significant decrease in desire (Murray & Milhausen, 2012). Similarly, in a cross-sectional German sample, women in long-term committed relationships—but not casual ones—reported lower sexual desire, while men's desire remained unaffected (Klusmann, 2002). These findings suggest that the increasing comfort and familiarity of established relationships may dampen desire, especially for women. However, most existing evidence comes from cross-sectional research, limiting our

understanding of how desire actually changes over time within couples. Few studies have tracked desire prospectively across the early years of a relationship—a critical period when desire begins to decline—making it difficult to identify the psychological or relational factors that might protect against this decline.

Declines in sexual desire have been well-documented during the early years of marriage and the transition to parenthood. Longitudinal studies of newlywed couples show that although desire is typically high at the beginning of marriage, it tends to decline over time, particularly for women. In two multi-year studies, men's desire remained relatively stable or declined modestly, whereas women's desire showed consistent declines that were associated with lower sexual and relationship satisfaction for both partners (McNulty et al., 2016, 2019). Similarly, in an 18-month study of newlywed couples, both men and women reported lower desire over time, but again, the decline was steeper for women (Mizrahi et al., 2019). The transition to parenthood further amplifies these declines. New mothers, but not their partners, report lower desire postpartum compared to non-parents (Schwenck et al., 2020), and longitudinal studies show that mothers' desire decreases from pregnancy through three months postpartum, with only partial recovery by 12 months (Rosen et al., 2021). In contrast, fathers' desire tends to remain stable or even increase during this period (McNulty et al., 2019; Rosen et al., 2021).

Although declines in sexual desire are well-established during major relationship transitions such as marriage and parenthood, recent research suggests that these declines can begin much earlier, even within the first year of a romantic relationship. For example, in a six-month study of undergraduates in new dating relationships, both men and women reported declines in desire over time (Impett et al., 2008). Similarly, couples who had been dating for just two to four months experienced significant declines in desire over an eight-month period

(Mizrahi et al., 2019). Notably, these early-stage declines contrast with findings from cross-sectional studies and those tracking couples during the transition to parenthood, which tend to show declines in desire primarily among women. In contrast, longitudinal studies that track couples from the beginning of their relationships reveal that both men and women experience declines in desire as early as the first few months. These findings suggest that desire may begin to erode even before couples reach traditional “milestones,” pointing to the importance of identifying early factors that help sustain sexual interest.

Importantly, these declines—though common—are not inconsequential. Lower sexual desire is associated with reduced sexual and relationship satisfaction (McNulty et al., 2019) and with a greater likelihood of relationship dissolution (Birnbaum 2018; Birnbaum & Reis, 2019). Given that desire tends to decline over time, and that this decline can erode both sexual and relationship satisfaction, it is critical to understand the conditions under which desire can be maintained. One such factor is self-expansion—the process of growing through shared novel experiences and incorporating aspects of one’s partner into the self—which may help buffer against declines in desire during this pivotal early period of romantic development.

Self-Expansion and Sexual Desire in Relationships

Self-expansion—the process of broadening one’s self-concept by incorporating aspects of a partner and having new, exciting experiences together (Aron & Aron, 1986; 1996; Aron et al., 2000)—is one factor that may be associated with the trajectory of sexual desire in relationships (Carswell & Impett, 2021; Muise et al., 2019). According to self-expansion theory, the process of falling in love involves learning about a partner and integrating their qualities, identities, and perspectives into one’s own self-concept (Aron & Aron, 1986, 1996). Consistent with this idea, undergraduate students reported adding more unique content to their self-concept after falling in

love (Aron et al., 1995). Additionally, couples in committed relationships exhibit cognitive overlap with their partners—referring to themselves using plural pronouns (e.g., “We are happy” as opposed to “Greta and I are happy”) and listing shared traits (Agnew et al., 1998; Aron et al., 1991).

Importantly, self-expansion is not limited to the early stages of a relationship, but it can continue to develop through shared activities that foster novelty and excitement (Mattingly & Lewandowski, 2014), such as attending special events, learning new skills together, or having a date night with a partner. However, these activities need not be extraordinary; everyday experiences such as learning how to make a new meal together, playing a board game, or having an in-depth conversation are all avenues for self-expansion (Muise et al., 2019). Experimental studies show that couples randomly assigned to engage in novel activities report greater self-expansion than those assigned to routine tasks (e.g., Aron et al., 2000; Muise et al., 2019; Tomlinson et al., 2019), and people feel more connected after planning exciting date nights (Harasymchuk et al., 2021).

Self-expansion plays a key role in promoting relationship satisfaction and stability (Graham & Harf, 2015; McIntyre et al., 2025; Muise et al. 2019; West et al., 2022). Low levels of self-expansion are also associated with problematic relationship dynamics, including increased attention to alternative partners (Vanderdrift et al., 2011), greater susceptibility to infidelity (Lewandowski & Ackerman, 2006), and more frequent thoughts about ending the relationship (Joel et al., 2018). In fact, when people contemplate whether to stay or leave a relationship, they often weigh whether their partner fosters or stifles their personal growth. Joel and colleagues (2018) found that key stay-leave decision-making themes included “improvement of the self” and “hindering self-improvement,” suggesting that partners who stifle growth may

prompt break-up considerations. Collectively, these findings emphasize the central role of self-expansion in shaping long-term relationship well-being.

Self-expansion theory has been proposed as a framework for how relationships evolve over time (Carswell & Impett, 2021). According to self-expansion theory, at the outset of a new romantic relationship, people often experience rapid self-expansion as they discover new aspects of their partner and incorporate these into their own identity (Aron et al., 2004). This period of rapid growth and novelty is thought to fuel early relationship passion (Carswell & Impett, 2021). However, as relationships progress and partners become increasingly familiar with one another, opportunities for continued self-expansion tend to decline (Aron et al., 2013). Empirical research supports these ideas. In a longitudinal study of people in new relationships, self-expansion remained fairly stable over the first year (Mattingly et al., 2019), consistent with theoretical accounts suggesting that early relationships are ripe with opportunities for growth (Aron et al., 2004). In contrast, studies comparing people in longer-term relationships to those in newer ones finds lower levels of self-expansion in more established relationships (Sheets, 2014). These findings suggest that, like sexual desire, self-expansion may begin to decline after the first year of a relationship. However, to date, no research has tracked self-expansion continuously over the transition from early-stage to more established relationships—a critical gap in understanding how relational growth unfolds over time.

Declines in self-expansion as relationships progress have been proposed as one explanation for the corresponding declines in passion and sexual desire over time (Carswell & Impett, 2021). Consistent with this idea, self-expansion is associated with higher sexual desire in longer-term relationships (Goss et al., 2022; Muise et al., 2019; Sheets, 2014), and this association is stronger for couples in longer versus shorter relationships (Muise et al., 2019).

Daily diary studies show that on days when couples report greater self-expansion in their relationship, both partners also report higher sexual desire and are more likely to engage in sexual activity (Muise et al., 2019). Experimental studies similarly demonstrate that couples assigned to engage in or reflect on self-expanding activities (vs. familiar and comfortable activities or a control condition), report higher sexual desire for their partner (Goss & Muise, 2022; Muise et al., 2019). Notably, even among couples coping with clinically low desire, those who report greater opportunities for self-expansion tend to experience higher sexual desire for their partner (Raposo et al., 2020). Together, these findings suggest that self-expansion may serve as a powerful mechanism for sustaining desire in long-term relationships.

Although self-expansion is theorized to decline as partners move beyond the initial “honeymoon” phase of a relationship, relatively little empirical research has tracked changes in self-expansion over time—particularly during the pivotal transition from early-stage to more established romantic relationships. Declines in sexual desire have been documented in both early and longer-term romantic relationships (e.g., Graham et al., 2017; Impett et al., 2008; Klusmann, 2002; McNulty et al., 2019; Mizrahi et al., 2019; Murray & Milhausen, 2012; Prekatsounaki et al., 2019; Rosen et al., 2021; Schwenck et al., 2020), highlighting the need to understand the factors involved in the maintenance of desire over time. One promising possibility is that higher levels of self-expansion during the early years of a relationship may serve as a protective factor, buffering against the normative decline in sexual desire as relationships progress.

The Current Study

The current study tracks the trajectories of both sexual desire and self-expansion in a sample of couples in the early stages of their romantic relationships ($M_{relationship\ length} = 9$ months) and followed them over an 18-month period as they transitioned out of the honeymoon phase

into a more established relationship. I predicted that, on average, both self-expansion and sexual desire would decline over the course of the study. I also tested whether higher self-expansion—both at the outset of the study and on average across the study period—would buffer against the typical declines in sexual desire. That is, individuals who reported greater self-expansion were expected to maintain higher desire over time. In addition, I examined within-person increases in self-expansion (i.e., times when individuals reported higher self-expansion than typical for themselves), would be associated with higher desire and a slower decline in desire over time.

Given conceptual distinctions within the self-expansion construct, I also explored effects differed based on how self-expansion was defined: as engaging in new and exciting experiences versus expanding one's self-concept through the relationship. Building on prior dyadic research, (Goss et al., 2022; Muise et al., 2019, Raposo et al., 2020), I tested whether a partner's self-expansion predicted higher desire and buffered against typical declines in desire. Finally, given previous findings that women are more susceptible to declines in desire (Graham et al., 2017; Klusmann, 2002; McNulty et al., 2016; 2019; Murray & Milhausen, 2012; Prekatsounaki et al., 2019), I explored whether gender moderated the trajectory of desire and the potential buffering effect of self-expansion. All hypotheses and analytic strategies were pre-registered, https://osf.io/bd3ry/?view_only=24b2ae763c7143b992381d30e60365d4.

Methods

Participants and Procedure

To test my predictions, I recruited people in new relationships (i.e., within the first 15 months) online from August 2019 to June 2022 to participate in a dyadic longitudinal study with seven timepoints over 1.5 years. Study flyers were shared on social media platforms (Instagram, Facebook, Reddit), Kijiji, Craigslist, and on the SHaRe Lab website. Interested participants were

asked to contact us via email. Those who reached out received detailed study information and completed an eligibility pre-screener. To be eligible, participants had to be 18 years or older, in a romantic relationship of 3 to 15 months' duration at the time of enrollment, living geographically close enough to their partner to see each other in person at least once a week, and sexually active. Participants were also required to reside in Canada or the United States, be able to read and understand English, and have access to a computer, phone, or tablet with internet access.

If a participant met the eligibility criteria, I then emailed their partner and asked them to complete the same pre-screener. If they passed the telephone screening call, both partners were invited to begin the baseline survey (separate links). Couples who passed the phone screening were sent individualized links to complete a baseline survey. Only couples in which both partners completed the baseline survey were eligible to continue in the study. Before each subsequent survey, I confirmed that participants were still in a romantic relationship with their partner. If a participant reported a breakup, they received compensation and were withdrawn from the study. Participants were compensated \$15 CAD (or \$ 12 USD) per survey for a total of \$105 CAD (or \$84 USD) per person.

A total of 218 couples (436 individuals) were initially enrolled in the study. Of these, 20 couples were excluded for the following reasons: 11 couples were removed because one or both partners did not complete the baseline survey, six couples were removed for sharing the same phone number across multiple dyads, raising concerns about duplicate participation, two couples were removed for suspicious responding, and one couple opted out voluntarily. The baseline sample included 198 couples (396 individuals). At the 18-month follow-up, data were available for 112 intact couples and 20 individuals whose partners had dropped out (244 individuals total), representing a 61.6% retention rate. For our analyses, I required participants to complete three or

more surveys, resulting in a final sample of 341 individuals (170.5 couples) at baseline and 259 individuals (129.5 couples) at the final timepoint, representing a 76.0% retention rate. In our final sample, of the 41 couples that dropped out of the study (i.e., did not complete the final timepoint), 24 couples indicated that they broke up.

Participants were, on average, 28.8 years old ($SD = 7.0$, range = 18–56) and had been in their current relationship for an average of 9.0 months ($SD = 2.4$, range = 4–17.5) at the time of enrollment. Most resided in Canada (77.1%, $n = 263$), with the remainder living in the United States (22.6%, $n = 77$). Just over half of the sample identified as White (50.4%, $n = 172$), with the rest identifying as East Asian (16.1%, $n = 55$), South Asian (9.4%, $n = 32$), Black (7.3%, $n = 25$) and or another ethnicity (16.7%, $n = 57$). Most participants were dating (69.5%, $n = 237$), while others were living together (21.0%, $n = 71$), engaged (4.3%, $n = 15$), married (2.6%, $n = 9$), or reported another relationship status (2.6%, $n = 9$). 77 couples (45%) indicated that they moved in together and 42 couples (24.6%) got engaged at a later timepoint. A small proportion of participants had children at the start of the study (8.5%, $n = 29$) and 18 couples (10.6%) reported being pregnant at a later timepoint. Regarding sexual orientation, most identified as straight/heterosexual (71.8%, $n = 245$), with others identifying as bisexual (8.2%, $n = 28$), lesbian (7.3%, $n = 25$), queer (5.9%, $n = 20$), gay (2.6%, $n = 9$), or another identity (4.1%, $n = 14$). A little over half identified as women (52.2%, $n = 178$), 43.4% ($n = 148$) identified as men, and 4.1% identified as another identity ($n = 14$). See Table 1 for a detailed breakdown of demographics.

Table 1*Sample Characteristics (N = 341)*

Characteristic	<i>M</i> (range or <i>n</i>)	<i>SD</i> or %
Age (years)	28.8 (18 – 56)	7.0
Relationship duration (months)	9.0 (4 – 17.5)	2.4
Ethnicity		
White (e.g., North American, European, etc.)	172	50.4%
Black (e.g., African, Caribbean, etc.)	25	7.3%
East Asian (e.g., Chinese, Korean, etc.)	55	16.1%
South Asian (e.g., Indian, Pakistani, etc.)	32	9.4%
Latin American (e.g., Mexican, Columbian, etc.)	14	4.1%
Native American/First Nation (e.g., Cree/Ojibway, etc.)	6	1.8%
Bi- or multi-ethnic/ racial (e.g., White/Black, etc.)	19	5.5%
Not listed	17	5.0%
Missing	1	0.3%
Country of residence		
United States	77	22.6%
Canada	263	77.1%
Missing	1	0.3%
Relationship status		
Dating	237	69.7%
Living together (not common-law or married)	71	21%
Common-law	4	1.2%

Married	9	2.6%
Engaged	15	4.4%
Not listed	4	1.2%
Missing	1	0.3%
Sexual Orientation		
Asexual	2	0.6%
Bisexual	28	8.2%
Gay	9	2.6%
Lesbian	25	7.4%
Straight/Heterosexual	245	71.9%
Pansexual	9	2.6%
Queer	20	5.9%
Not listed	2	0.6%
Missing	1	0.3%
Gender		
Man	148	43.4%
Woman	178	52.2%
Trans-identify as man	2	0.6%
Trans-identify as woman	1	0.3%
Not listed	10	2.9%
Missing	2	0.6%

Note. "Not listed" includes participants who did not identify with one of the presented categories. Gender was assessed with the item, "i.e., What is the gender with which you

identify?” with response options including 1 = “male” 2 = “female” 3 = “trans-identify as male” 4 = “trans-identify as female” 5 = “not listed (please specify)”. I acknowledge that this item conflates sex and gender which I have corrected in newer studies.

Measures

All measures, except gender, were assessed at every time point. To evaluate the psychometric reliability of our scales, I calculated McDonald's omega for measures with three or more items and intraclass correlations for measures with only two items. Descriptive statistics at each timepoint and reliability estimates are reported in Table 2. Full versions of all measures are provided in Appendix A. Correlations among study variables are shown in Table 3.

Relational Self-expansion

Relational self-expansion was assessed with six items (e.g., "Over the past three months...Has being with your partner resulted in you having new experiences?") from the Self-Expansion Questionnaire (SEQ; Lewandowski & Aron, 2002) from 1 = "not very much" to 7 = "very much so". I calculated a composite (mean) score, with higher scores indicating higher self-expansion ($M = 5.48$, $SD = 1.30$, $\omega = 0.98$).

Given that self-expansion has been conceptualized as both the experience of engaging in novel activities with one's partner and the incorporation of the partner into one's self-concept, in exploratory models, I tested whether the effects differed when focusing specifically on new and exciting experiences (represented by two items from the scale: "Over the past three months... Has being with your partner resulted in you having new experiences?" and "Has your partner provided you with a source of excitement?"; $M = 5.50$, $SD = 1.37$, $\omega = 0.91$) versus expansion of the self-concept (represented by three items: "Have you felt a greater awareness of things because of your partner?", "Has being with your partner expanded your sense of the kind of person you are?", and "Do you feel you have gained a larger perspective on life because of your partner?"; $M = 5.43$, $SD = 1.37$, $\omega = 0.96$). The final item "Has your partner increased your knowledge?" less directly assessed these specific types of self-expansion (it could represent both

learning new things and expanding one's self-concept) so I did not include in these analyses. See the Supplement for further details on results.

Sexual Desire

Sexual desire was assessed with a modified version of the desire subscale from the Female Sexual Function Index (FSFI; Rosen et al., 2000) to assess partner-specific sexual desire. Participants rated two items on 5-point scales: "Over the past four weeks, how often did you feel sexual desire or interest for your partner?" (1 = "almost always or always" to 5 = "almost never or never") and "Over the past four weeks, how would you rate your level (degree) of sexual desire or interest?" (1 = "very high" to 5 = "very low or none at all"). Items were reverse-coded, and I calculated a composite (mean) score with higher scores indicating higher desire ($M = 3.68$, $SD = 0.90$, $ICC = 0.94$).

To assess the robustness of our findings, I conducted additional analyses using an alternative measure of sexual desire (see supplement for details). Specifically, I used six items from the dyadic desire subscale of the Sexual Desire Inventory (e.g. "During the last month, how often would you have liked to engage in sexual activity with your partner (for example, touching each other's genitals, giving or receiving oral stimulation, intercourse, etc.)?"; SDI; Moyano et al., 2017), from 1 = "not at all", 2 = "once a month", 3 = "once every two weeks", 4 = "once a week", 5 = "twice a week", 6 = "3 to 4 times a week", 7 = "once a day", 8 = "more than once a day"). I calculated a composite (sum; range from 2 to 48) score with higher scores indicating higher desire ($M = 34.35$, $SD = 8.69$, $\omega = 0.98$).

Relationship Satisfaction

I assessed relationship satisfaction with three items from the Perceived Relationship Quality Components Inventory (e.g. "How satisfied are you with your relationship?"; PRQC;

Fletcher et al., 2000) from 1 = “not at all” to 7 = “extremely”. I calculated a composite (mean) score, with higher scores indicating higher relationship satisfaction ($M = 6.05$, $SD = 1.03$, $\omega = 0.98$).

Table 2*Descriptive statistics and reliability estimates*

Variable	<i>M(SD)</i>								Range	ICC/ Omega
	Baseline	3 months	6 months	9 months	12 months	15 months	18 months	Across all timepoints		
Self-expansion	5.88(1.05)	5.69(1.17)	5.41(1.26)	5.42(1.31)	5.28(1.39)	5.27(1.43)	5.17(1.41)	5.48(1.30)	1 - 7	0.98
Exciting SE	6.00(1.08)	5.75(1.27)	5.44(1.29)	5.38(1.38)	5.28(1.44)	5.17(1.52)	5.19(1.45)	5.50(1.37)	1 - 7	0.91
Concept SE	5.79(1.15)	5.64(1.24)	5.35(1.35)	5.41(1.38)	5.25(1.45)	5.30(1.48)	5.10(1.51)	5.43(1.37)	1 - 7	0.96
SDI desire	36.92(8.00)	35.49(8.42)	34.15(8.42)	34.27(8.71)	33.35(8.17)	33.11(8.87)	31.65(9.67)	34.35(8.69)	2 - 48	0.98
FSFI desire	3.96(0.88)	3.80(0.93)	3.69(0.93)	3.60(0.96)	3.50(0.97)	3.45(0.93)	3.45(0.98)	3.68(0.95)	1 - 5	0.94
Relationship satisfaction	6.24(0.81)	6.06(0.97)	6.04(0.99)	5.99(1.16)	6.00(1.03)	5.98(1.15)	6.00(1.10)	6.05(1.03)	1 - 7	0.98

Note: SE = self-expansion, FSFI = Female Sexual Function Index, SDI = Sexual Desire Inventory

Table 3*Correlations between key variables*

Variable	Self-expansion	Exciting SE	Concept SE	FSFI desire	SDI desire	Relationship satisfaction
Self-expansion	0.33***					
Exciting SE	0.93***	0.32***				
Concept SE	0.97***	0.83***	0.30***			
FSFI desire	0.31***	0.31***	0.30***	0.16***		
SDI desire	0.35***	0.37***	0.33***	0.70***	0.34***	
Relationship satisfaction	0.54***	0.53***	0.51***	0.26***	0.31***	0.46***

Note: Bolded correlations between the same variables represent correlations between partners in a couple's scores on that variable.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. SE = self-expansion, FSFI = Female Sexual Function Index, SDI = Sexual Desire Inventory

Analyses

I analyzed the data using two-level cross-classified indistinguishable dyadic growth curve models (Kashy et al., 2008) which account for the nested structure of the data, with two partners per couple and up to seven timepoints per partner. I followed the guidelines in Kenny and Ackerman (2023) and used the sum-difference approach to model random intercepts and slopes. Time was centered around the first timepoint ($T1 = 0$) and subsequent timepoints were 3 units apart ($T2=3$, $T3=6$ etc.) to represent the number of months between timepoints. First, to test my predictions about the trajectories of sexual desire and self-expansion, I tested separate models with linear and non-linear effects of time predicting each variable. To test for non-linear (quadratic) change over time, I included a quadratic (squared) term for time and retained it in models where it was statistically significant ($p < .05$). Next, I tested whether self-expansion over the course of the study (between person effects) and higher than a person's own average (within person effects) predicted desire and moderated the effect of time on desire. In these models, for between person effects, relational self-expansion was aggregated and grand-mean centered across all time points, and for within person effects, self-expansion was person-mean centered. To test whether self-expansion was associated with sexual desire across the study and moderated the trajectory of desire, I tested models with time (linear and non-linear), self-expansion (grand mean centered across the study and person mean centered), and the interaction between self-expansion and time. I also tested parallel models using self-expansion assessed at baseline (grand-mean centered at baseline). If an interaction was significant, I tested the effect of time on desire at high (+1 *SD*) and low (-1 *SD*) levels of self-expansion. All models were re-estimated while controlling for relationship satisfaction. I calculated the minimum detectable standardized effect size given our sample size using guidelines outlined in Arend and Schafer (2019). The

sample has $>.80$ power to detect a small (.11) within person effect, small to moderate (.23) between-person effect and a moderate (.32) cross-level interaction. These estimates are based on a between person (L2 in tables; Arend & Schafer, 2019) sample of 200 and a within person (L1; Arend & Schafer, 2019) sample of 7 (representing the number of timepoints).

I also exploratorily tested whether a partner's self-expansion (above and beyond a person's own self-expansion) moderated changes in desire overtime. Guided by the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (APIM; Kenny et al., 2006), I structured the data so that each dyad was represented by two lines of data, allowing each participant within a dyad to represent both an actor and a partner (see Campbell & Kashy, 2002, for a sample arrangement of data). In these models I tested both actor and partner reports of self-expansion as predictors in the model.

Finally, given conceptual distinctions within the self-expansion construct, I explored whether the effects differed based on whether self-expansion was conceptualized in terms of engaging in new and exciting experiences versus expanding one's self-concept through the relationship.

To rule out selective drop-out as an alternative explanation, I examined whether participants who completed more survey waves differed systematically from those who completed fewer waves on any demographic characteristic or key study variable at each time-point. Specifically, for every wave I regressed (a) self-expansion, (b) sexual desire, and (c) the control demographics (age, relationship length) on the total number of surveys each participant ultimately completed. In other words, I tested, for example, whether a participant who provided data at all seven waves reported higher (or lower) self-expansion at the 3-month assessment than a participant provided data for only two waves. Number of surveys completed did not predict any significant differences in demographics or key variables of interest (see supplemental Table S1),

suggesting that attrition is unlikely to have biased the reported decline-trajectory or buffering tests.

Results

Trajectories of Sexual Desire and Self-Expansion

Sexual Desire

Sexual desire declined over the course of the study, although the rate of decline became less steep over time. Specifically, there was a significant linear decrease in desire ($b = -0.05$, $SE = 0.01$, $t(840.58) = -6.11$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [-0.07, -0.03]), and a significant positive quadratic effect indicating that the decline became less steep over time ($b = 0.001$, $SE = 0.00$, $t(756.46) = 2.97$, $p = .003$, 95% CI [0.00, 0.002]; see Table 4 and Figure 1). These patterns remained the same controlling for relationship satisfaction (see Table 4 and Figure 1). I tested whether there were gender differences in the trajectory of desire over time. Gender did not moderate declines in desire, therefore men and women declined at similar rate (see Table 5). I observed a similar pattern of results using an alternative measure of desire (SDI; Moyano et al., 2017), see supplement Tables S2 and S3, and Figure S1.

Self-Expansion

Self-expansion also significantly declined over the duration of the study (Table 4). Time negatively predicted self-expansion ($b = -0.08$, $SE = 0.01$, $t(868.83) = -6.28$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [-0.10, -0.05]), and the quadratic effect of time was significant and positive ($b = 0.002$, $SE = 0.001$, $t(777.456) = 3.31$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [0.001, 0.003]), indicating that the rate of decline in self-expansion slowed over time. These patterns remained significant after controlling for relationship satisfaction (see Table 4 and Figure 2).

I tested whether there were gender differences in the trajectory of self-expansion over time. Gender did not moderate declines in self-expansion, therefore men and women declined at similar rate (see Table 6).

Self-expansion is theorized to consist of two components: (1) the experience of novelty and excitement, and (2) the inclusion the partner in one's self concept. I conducted exploratory analyses to examine whether these two components followed distinct trajectories over time. Both novelty and excitement (linear effect; $b = -0.10$, $SE = 0.01$, $t(854.82) = -7.50$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [-0.13, -0.08]; quadratic effect; $b = 0.003$, $SE = 0.001$, $t(778.07) = 4.43$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [0.002, 0.005]) and expansion of one's self-concept (linear effect; $b = -0.06$, $SE = 0.01$, $t(865.01) = -4.98$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [-0.09, -0.04]; quadratic effect; $b = 0.002$, $SE = 0.001$, $t(781.13) = 2.37$, $p = .018$, 95% CI [0.000, 0.003]) declined over time following a similar pattern the full self-expansion measure. These patterns remained significant after controlling for relationship satisfaction (see Table 7 and Figure 3). I tested whether there were gender differences in the trajectory of subcomponents of self-expansion over time. Gender did not moderate declines in the subcomponents of self-expansion, therefore men and women declined at similar rate (see Table 8).

Table 4*Trajectories of desire and self-expansion over time*

Parameter	Sexual desire		Sexual desire (controlling for relationship satisfaction)		Self-expansion		Self-expansion (controlling for relationship satisfaction)	
	<i>b(SE)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(SE)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(SE)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(SE)</i>	<i>p</i>
Intercept	3.95(0.05)	<.001	3.92(0.05)	<.001	5.86(0.06)	<.001	5.78(0.05)	<.001
Time (linear)	-0.05(0.008)	<.001	-0.04(0.008)	<.001	-0.08(0.01)	<.001	-0.05(0.01)	<.001
Time ² (quadratic)	0.001(0.00)	0.003	0.001(0.00)	.020	0.002(0.001)	<.001	0.001(0.001)	.028
Relationship satisfaction	—	—	0.17(0.02)	<.001	—	—	0.55(0.03)	<.001

Figure 1

Trajectory of sexual desire over time

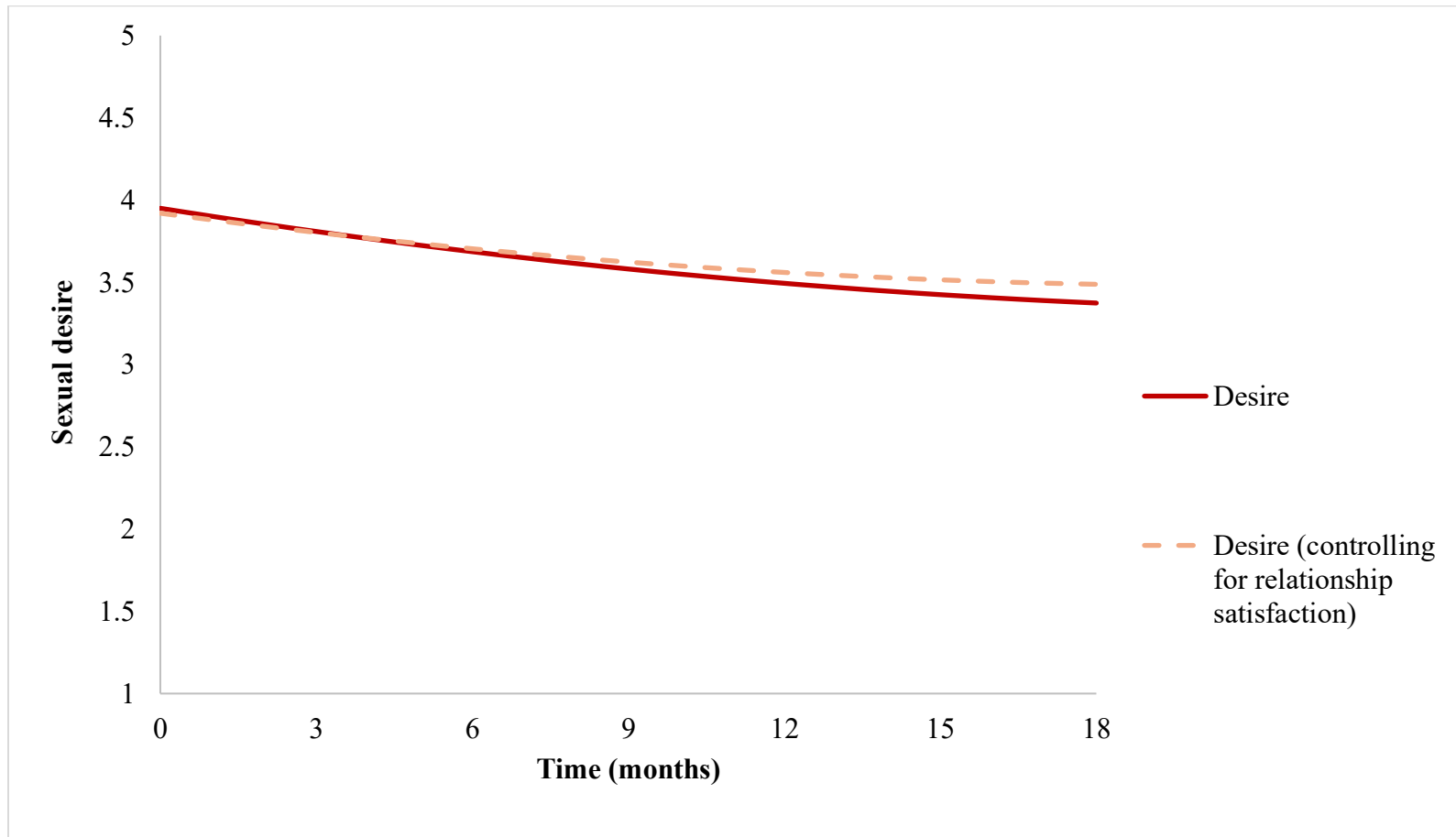
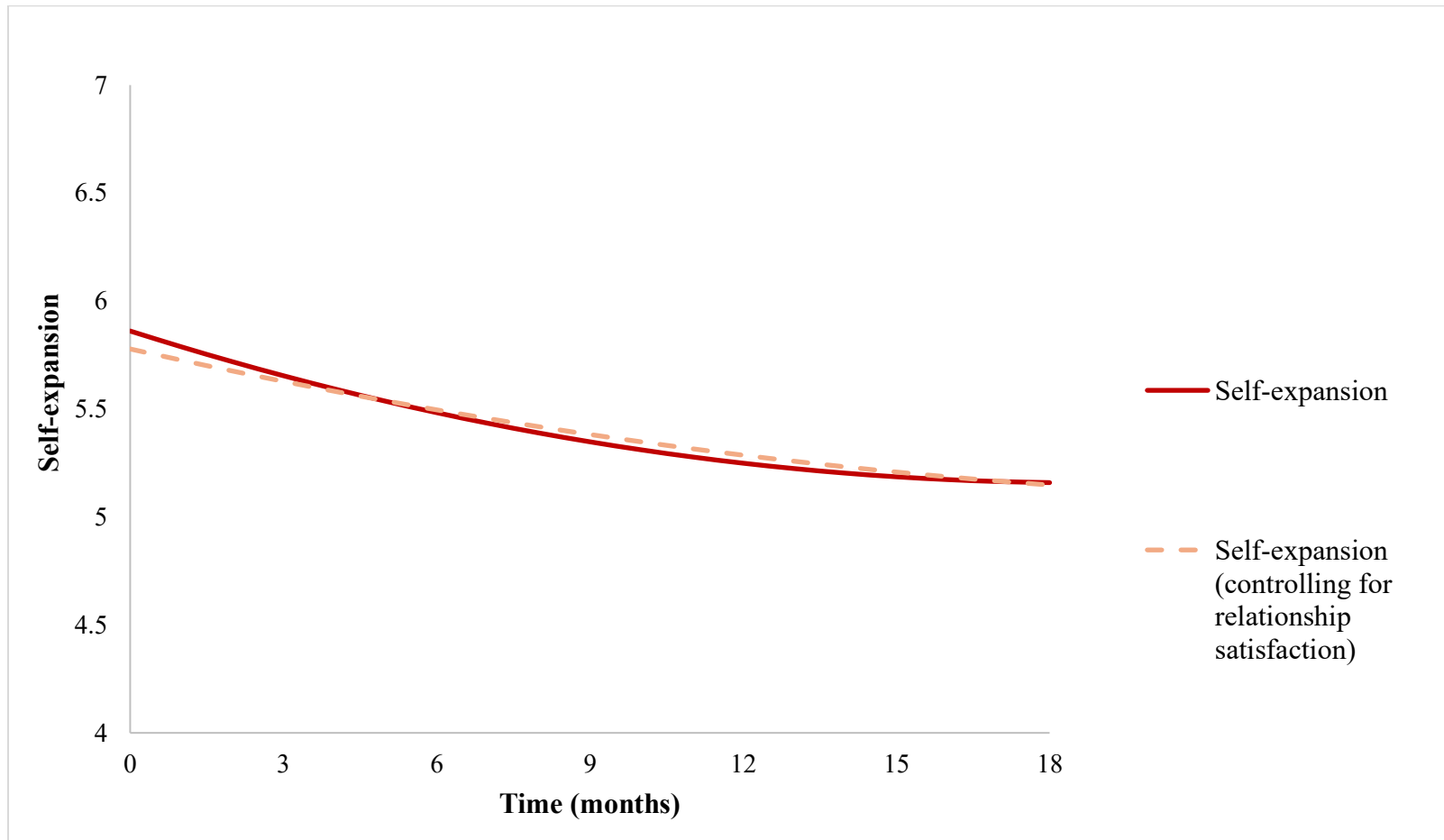


Table 5*Gender differences in the trajectory of desire over time*

Parameter	Desire x gender		Desire x gender controlling for relationship satisfaction	
	<i>b</i> (<i>SE</i>)	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i> (<i>SE</i>)	<i>p</i>
Intercept	3.96(0.05)	<.001	3.94(0.05)	<.001
Time	-0.05(0.008)	<.001	-0.04(0.008)	<.001
Time ²	0.001(0.00)	.013	0.001(0.00)	.060
Gender	0.16(0.04)	<.001	0.16(0.04)	<.001
Relationship satisfaction	—	—	0.16(0.02)	<.001
Gender x Time	0.01(0.008)	.061	0.01(0.008)	.109
Gender x Time ²	-0.001(0.00)	.093	-0.001(0.00)	.152

Figure 2

Trajectory of self-expansion overtime



Note: The mean level was above the midpoint of the scale and therefore I present a truncated y-axis to better depict the pattern.

Table 6*Gender differences in the trajectory of self-expansion over time*

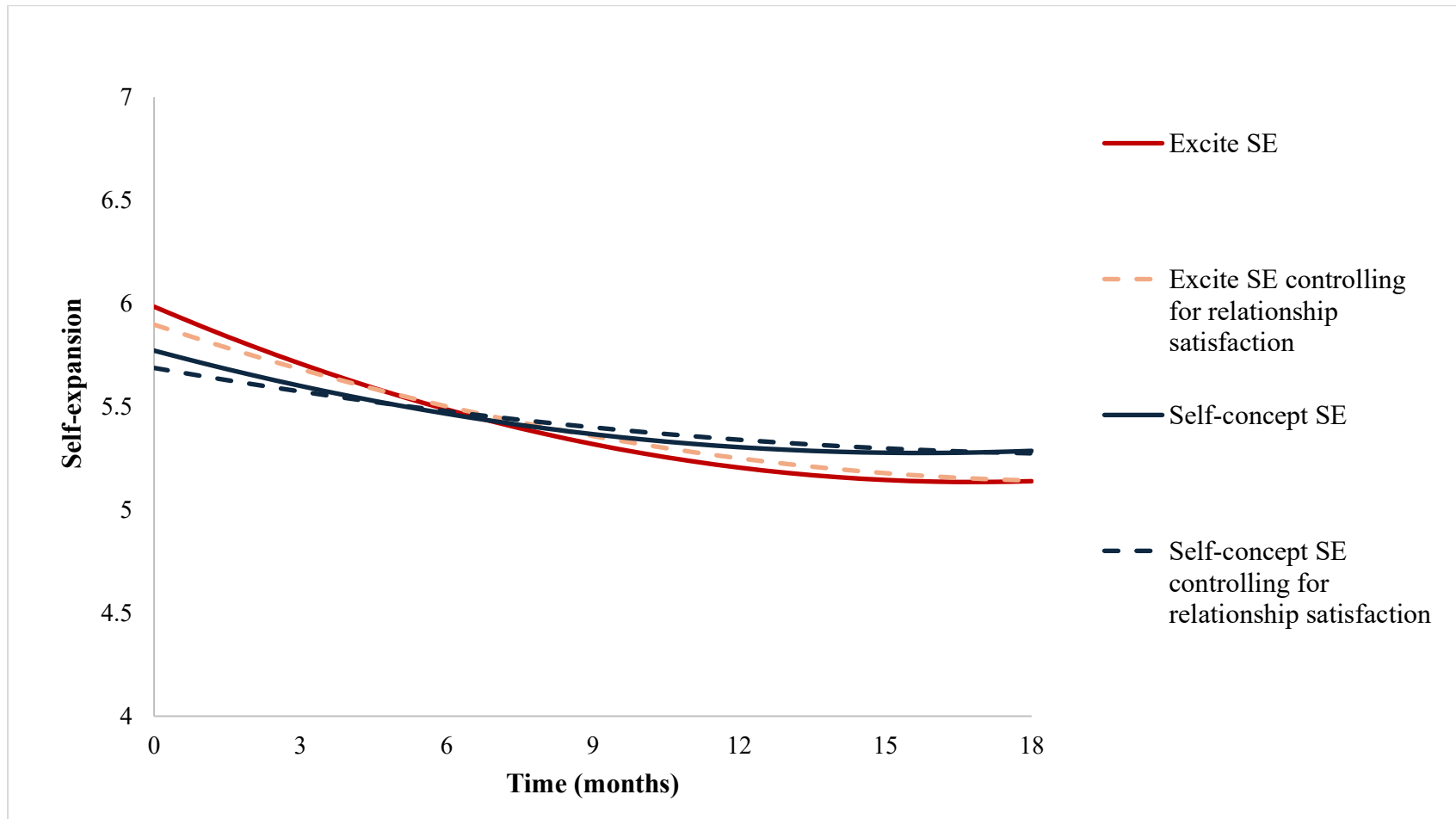
Parameter	Self-expansion x gender		Self-expansion x gender controlling for relationship satisfaction	
	<i>b</i> (<i>SE</i>)	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i> (<i>SE</i>)	<i>p</i>
Intercept	5.89(0.07)	<.001	5.78(0.05)	<.001
Time	-0.07(0.01)	<.001	-0.05(0.01)	<.001
Time ²	0.002(0.001)	.002	0.001(0.001)	.035
Gender	0.07(0.05)	.207	0.07(0.05)	.166
Relationship satisfaction	—	—	0.54(0.03)	<.001
Gender x Time	0.004(0.01)	.728	-0.005(0.01)	.641
Gender x Time ²	0.00(0.001)	.820	0.00(0.001)	.577

Table 7*Trajectories of exciting and self-concept subcomponents of self-expansion overtime*

Parameter	Exciting self-expansion				Self-concept self-expansion			
	Exciting self-expansion		(controlling for relationship satisfaction)		Self-concept self-expansion		(controlling for relationship satisfaction)	
	<i>b</i> (<i>SE</i>)	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i> (<i>SE</i>)	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i> (<i>SE</i>)	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i> (<i>SE</i>)	<i>p</i>
Intercept	5.99(0.07)	<.001	5.90(0.06)	<.001	5.77(0.07)	<.001	5.69(0.06)	<.001
Time (linear)	-0.10(0.01)	<.001	-0.08(0.01)	<.001	-0.06(0.01)	<.001	-0.04(0.01)	<.001
Time ² (quadratic)	0.003(0.001)	<.001	.002(0.001)	<.001	0.002(0.001)	.018	0.001(0.001)	.204
Relationship satisfaction	—	—	0.58(0.03)	<.001	—	—	0.55(0.03)	<.001

Figure 3

Trajectories of exciting and self-concept subcomponents of self-expansion overtime



Note: SE = self-expansion. The mean level was above the midpoint of the scale and therefore I present a truncated y-axis to better depict the pattern.

Table 8*Gender differences in the trajectories of exciting and self-concept subcomponents of self-expansion overtime*

Parameter	Exciting self-expansion		Exciting self-expansion (controlling for relationship satisfaction)		Self-concept self- expansion		Self-concept self- expansion (controlling for relationship satisfaction)	
	<i>b</i> (<i>SE</i>)	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i> (<i>SE</i>)	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i> (<i>SE</i>)	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i> (<i>SE</i>)	<i>p</i>
Intercept	5.99 (0.07)	<.001	5.90 (0.06)	<.001	5.78 (0.07)	<.001	5.69 (0.06)	<.001
Time	-0.10 (0.01)	<.001	-0.08 (0.01)	<.001	-0.06 (0.01)	<.001	-0.04 (0.01)	<.001
Time ²	0.003 (0.001)	<.001	0.002 (0.001)	.001	0.002 (0.001)	.019	0.001 (0.001)	.182
Gender	0.06 (0.06)	.335	0.06 (0.05)	.271	0.08 (0.06)	.195	0.07 (0.05)	.167
Relationship satisfaction	—	—	0.58 (0.03)	<.001	—	—	0.54 (0.03)	<.001
Gender x Time	0.002 (0.01)	.839	-0.01 (0.01)	.574	0.002 (0.01)	.864	-0.01 (0.01)	.567
Gender x Time ²	-0.00004 (0.001)	.946	0.00 (0.001)	.501	-0.00001 (0.001)	.991	0.00 (0.001)	.472

Self-Expansion Moderating the Trajectory of Desire Over Time

I next tested whether self-expansion (i.e., aggregated across the study) and within-person deviations in self-expansion moderated the trajectory of desire over time (Table 9). I began by testing the simplest model and incrementally added complexity, ensuring each model ran successfully before proceeding. Specifically, I tested models with: (1) linear time moderated by actor self-expansion, (2) linear and quadratic time moderated by actor self-expansion, (3) linear time moderated by actor and partner self-expansion, and (4) linear and quadratic time moderated by both actor and partner self-expansion. As results were largely similar across models, I report findings from the most comprehensive model—linear and quadratic time moderated by both actor and partner self-expansion—in the main text. Results for all other models are available in the supplement (Tables S3-5). Results for the alternative measure of desire are reported in the supplement (Tables S6-9).

Participants who reported higher overall self-expansion (i.e., aggregated across the study) also reported greater sexual desire ($b = 0.30$, $SE = 0.05$, $t(435.42) = 6.12$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [0.20, 0.40]; see Table 7). Additionally, at times when participants reported higher self-expansion than their own average (i.e., within-person deviations), they also reported higher desire ($b = 0.12$, $SE = 0.04$, $t(1382.98) = 2.95$, $p = .003$, 95% CI [0.04, 0.20]). These effects were replicated for engaging in exciting activities (see supplemental Tables S10-13) and expanding the self-concept (see supplemental Tables S18-21) subcomponents of self-expansion. However, a person's own self-expansion across the study (linear effect; $b = -0.02$, $SE = 0.01$, $t(1362.29) = -1.71$, $p = .087$, 95% CI [-0.03, 0.002]; quadratic effect; $b = 0.001$, $SE = 0.001$, $t(1271.25) = 1.61$, $p = .106$, 95% CI [0.00, 0.002]) and deviations from one's own average self-expansion (linear effect; $b = -0.01$, $SE = 0.01$, $t(1485.16) = -1.24$, $p = .214$, 95% CI [-0.04, 0.01]; quadratic effect; $b = 0.001$, $SE =$

0.001, $t(1465.95) = 1.38$, $p = .168$, 95% CI [0.00, 0.002]) did not significantly moderate changes in desire over time. That is, while a person's own greater self-expansion—both on average and at specific timepoints—was linked to higher desire, it did not significantly change the trajectory of desire across the study. All findings remained consistent when controlling for relationship satisfaction (see Table 9).

Above and beyond the effect of self-expansion on a person's own desire, I tested whether the effects extended to a partner's sexual desire (see Table 9). A person's reports of self-expansion across the study was not significantly associated with their partner's sexual desire ($b = 0.01$, $SE = 0.05$, $t(437.10) = 0.16$, $p = .876$, 95% CI [-0.09, 0.10]). However, at timepoints when a person reported higher self-expansion than their own average (i.e., deviations from their own average), their partner reported significantly higher desire ($b = 0.08$, $SE = 0.04$, $t(1378.74) = 1.99$, $p = .047$, 95% CI [0.001, 0.16]). When testing moderations by the exciting and self-concept subcomponents of self-expansion, neither self-expansion across the study nor within person deviations in self-expansion were associated with a partner's desire (see supplemental Tables S10-13 for exciting subcomponent and S18-21 for self-concept subcomponent).

A person's reports of self-expansion across the study (linear effect; $b = 0.01$, $SE = 0.01$, $t(1342.53) = 1.32$, $p = .185$, 95% CI [-0.01, 0.03]; quadratic effect; $b = -0.001$, $SE = 0.00$, $t(1257.81) = -1.36$, $p = .173$, 95% CI [-0.002, 0.00]) and within-person fluctuations in self-expansion—relative to their own average—(linear effect; $b = -0.02$, $SE = 0.01$, $t(1478.42) = -1.93$, $p = .054$, 95% CI [-0.04, 0.00]; quadratic effect; $b = 0.001$, $SE = 0.001$, $t(1458.22) = 1.90$, $p = .057$, 95% CI [-0.00004, 0.002]) did not moderate the trajectory of a partner's desire. However, when controlling for relationship satisfaction, within-person fluctuations in self-expansion moderating the linear trajectory of a partner's desire reached significance ($b = -0.02$,

$SE = 0.01, t(1479.82) = -1.97, p = .049, 95\% \text{ CI } [-0.04, 0.00]$), while the quadratic effect remained nonsignificant ($b = 0.001, SE = 0.001, t(1461.49) = 1.91, p = .056, 95\% \text{ CI } [-0.00003, 0.002]$). That is, when controlling for relationship satisfaction, at times when people reported higher self-expansion than their own average, their partner reported steeper declines in sexual desire (linear effect; $b = -0.05, SE = 0.02, t(1355.07) = -4.28, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI } [-0.07, -0.03]$; quadratic effect; $b = 0.002, SE = 0.001, t(1236.35) = 2.53, p = .012, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.00, 0.003]$). However, when people reported lower self-expansion than their own average, there was no effect of time on sexual desire (linear effect: $b = -0.02, SE = 0.01, t(1283.44) = -1.15, p = .251, 95\% \text{ CI } [-0.04, 0.01]$; quadratic effect: $b = 0.00, SE = 0.001, t(1292.91) = -0.19, p = .846, 95\% \text{ CI } [-0.001, 0.001]$; see Figure 4). This finding was not replicated when testing the subcomponents of self-expansion (excitement and self-concept; see supplement table S13 and S21) as predictors or for the alternative measure of desire as the outcome (see supplement Table S9).

All model results for exploratory analyses testing the exciting subcomponent of self-expansion predicting FSFI and SDI desire are presented in Supplement Tables S10–S13 and S14–S17, respectively. Results for the self-concept subcomponent predicting these outcomes are shown in Tables S18–S21 (FSFI) and S22–S25 (SDI).

I also tested whether there were gender differences in whether self-expansion (i.e., aggregated across the study) and within-person deviations in self-expansion moderated the trajectory of desire over time. Largely, there were no gender differences (see supplemental Table S26), however, gender significantly moderated the association between within-person fluctuations in a person's self-expansion and their partner's trajectory of desire over time (linear effect; $b = 0.03, SE = 0.01, t(1427.32) = 2.32, p = .020, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.004, 0.05]$; quadratic effect; $b = -0.002, SE = 0.001, t(1431.46) = -2.43, p = .015, 95\% \text{ CI } [-0.003, 0.00]$). Specifically, for

women, at times when women's partners reported higher than their own average self-expansion, women reported steeper declines in sexual desire (linear effect; $b = -0.04$, $SE = 0.02$, $t(1508.04) = -2.47$, $p = .014$, 95% CI [-0.07, -0.01]; quadratic effect; $b = 0.002$, $SE = 0.001$, $t(1486.27) = 2.28$, $p = .023$, 95% CI [0.00, 0.004]). However, times when women's partners reported lower than their own average self-expansion was not associated with women's sexual desire (linear effect; $b = -0.01$, $SE = 0.02$, $t(1496.46) = -0.76$, $p = .445$, 95% CI [-0.05, 0.02] quadratic effect: $b = 0.00$, $SE = 0.001$, $t(1483.69) = -0.12$, $p = .902$, 95% CI [-0.002, 0.002]; see figure 5). There were no differences in the trajectory of desire for times when men's partners were higher (vs. lower) in self-expansion (linear effect; $b = 0.02$, $SE = 0.02$, $t(1464.97) = 0.90$, $p = .369$, 95% CI [-0.02, 0.05]; quadratic effect; $b = -0.001$, $SE = 0.001$, $t(1454.83) = -1.21$, $p = .226$, 95% CI [-0.003, 0.001]). These findings held when controlling for relationship satisfaction (see table S27). I further tested whether these effects replicated for the subcomponents of self-expansion. These findings were replicated for the exciting (but not the self-concept) subcomponent of self-expansion such that when women's (but not men's) partners reported higher than their own average self-expansion, women reported steeper declines in sexual desire (see supplemental Tables S28-30). These gender differences were not replicated for the alternative measure of desire (see supplemental Tables S31-33).

I also tested whether participant's own self-expansion at the beginning of the study (at baseline) moderated the association between sexual desire and time (Table 9). Participants who reported higher self-expansion at the outset of the study also reported greater sexual desire ($b = 0.22$, $SE = 0.04$, $t(428.78) = 4.87$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [0.13, 0.30]). However, baseline self-expansion did not significantly moderate the linear ($b = -0.01$, $SE = 0.01$, $t(1517.17) = -1.34$, $p = .180$, 95% CI [-0.03, 0.005]) or quadratic ($b = 0.00$, $SE = 0.00$, $t(1377.62) = 0.99$, $p = .324$,

95% CI [0.00, 0.001]) trajectory of sexual desire over time. These results suggest that while individuals higher in self-expansion at baseline began the study with higher desire, their initial level of self-expansion did not alter the trajectory of desire.

Above and beyond a person's own self expansion at baseline predicting their own desire, I also tested whether a person's self-expansion at the start of the study was associated with their partner's desire. People's self-expansion at baseline was not significantly associated with a partner's desire ($b = 0.05$, $SE = 0.04$, $t(430.28) = 1.13$, $p = .261$, 95% CI [-0.04, 0.14]), nor did it significantly moderate linear ($b = 0.01$, $SE = 0.01$, $t(1519.77) = 0.91$, $p = .361$, 95% CI [-0.01, 0.02]) nor quadratic ($b = -0.001$, $SE = 0.00$, $t(1403.59) = -1.19$, $p = .236$, 95% CI [-0.001, 0.00]) change in sexual desire over time. All findings remained consistent when controlling for relationship satisfaction (see Table 9).

I also tested whether there were gender differences in the moderating role of baseline self-expansion for the association between sexual desire and time. There were no gender differences (see supplemental Table S8).

The results for baseline self-expansion were replicated in the alternative measure of desire with the exception of one between person partner effect and time squared, however this interaction was reduced to non-significance when controlling for relationship satisfaction (see table S13).

Table 9

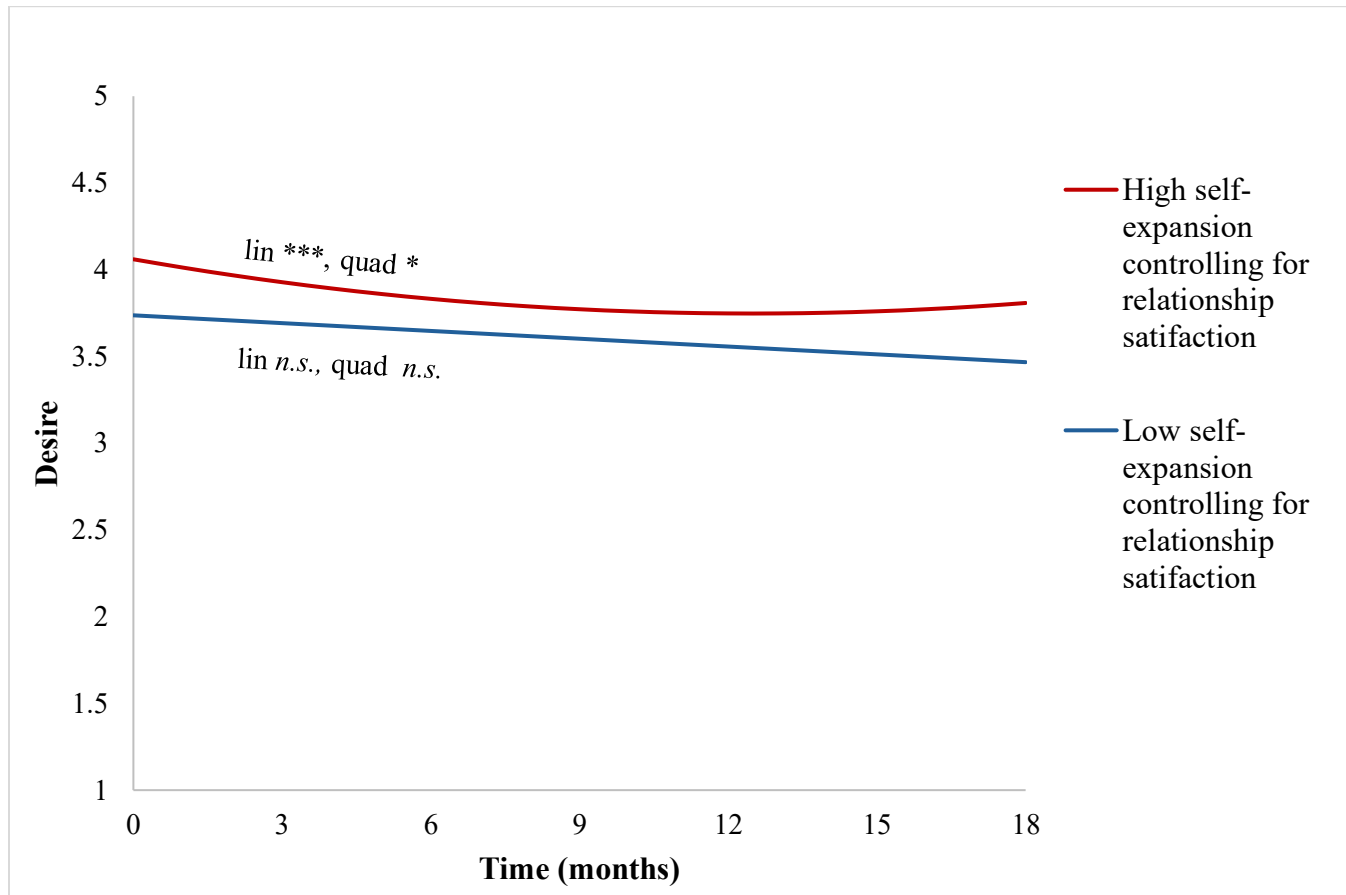
Actor and partner between- and within-person effects of self-expansion moderating the linear and curvilinear trajectory of desire over time

Parameter	Self-expansion		Self-expansion controlling for relationship satisfaction		Baseline self- expansion		Baseline self- expansion controlling for relationship satisfaction	
	<i>b</i> (<i>SE</i>)	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i> (<i>SE</i>)	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i> (<i>SE</i>)	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i> (<i>SE</i>)	<i>p</i>
Intercept	3.88(0.05)	<.001	3.87(0.05)	<.001	3.95(0.05)	<.001	3.92(0.05)	<.001
Time	-0.04(0.009)	<.001	-0.03(0.009)	<.001	-0.05(0.008)	<.001	-0.04(0.008)	<.001
Time ²	0.001(0.00)	.071	0.001(0.00)	.098	0.001(0.00)	.003	0.001(0.00)	.016
Actor between person self-expansion	0.30(0.05)	<.001	0.25(0.05)	<.001	0.22(0.04)	<.001	0.17(0.04)	<.001
Partner between person self-expansion	0.008(0.05)	.876	0.001(0.05)	.989	0.05(0.04)	.261	0.04(0.04)	.389
Actor within person self-expansion	0.12(0.04)	.003	0.09(0.04)	.031	—	—	—	—
Partner within person self-expansion	0.08(0.04)	.047	0.08(0.04)	.047	—	—	—	—
Time x Actor between person self-expansion	-0.02(0.009)	.087	-0.02(0.009)	.056	-0.01(0.008)	.180	-0.009(0.008)	.238
Time x Partner between person self-expansion	0.01(0.009)	.185	0.01(0.009)	.234	0.007(0.008)	.361	0.006(0.008)	.448
Time x Actor within person self-expansion	-0.01(0.01)	.214	-0.01(0.01)	.276	—	—	—	—

Parameter	Self-expansion		Self-expansion controlling for relationship satisfaction		Baseline self- expansion		Baseline self- expansion controlling for relationship satisfaction	
	<i>b(SE)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(SE)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(SE)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(SE)</i>	<i>p</i>
Time x Partner within person self-expansion	-0.02(0.01)	.054	-0.02(0.01)	.049	——	——	——	——
Time ² x Actor between person self-expansion	0.001(0.001)	.106	0.001(0.001)	.076	0.00(0.00)	.324	0.00(0.00)	.401
Time ² x Partner between person self-expansion	-0.001(0.00)	.173	-0.001(0.00)	.223	-0.001(0.00)	.236	0.00(0.00)	.306
Time ² x Actor within person self-expansion	0.001(0.001)	.168	0.001(0.001)	.210	——	——	——	——
Time ² x Partner within person self-expansion	0.001(0.001)	.057	0.001(0.001)	.056	——	——	——	——

Figure 4

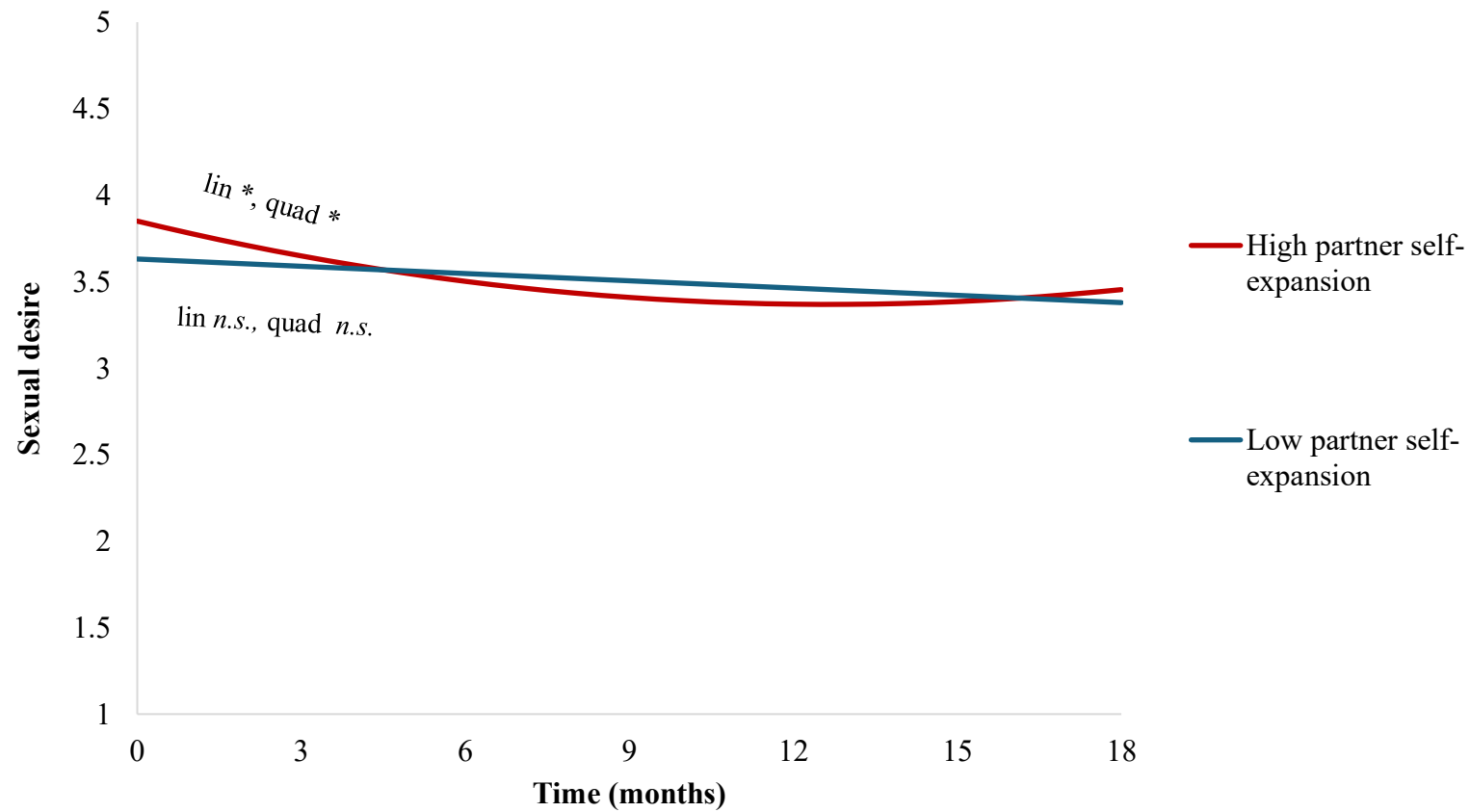
Within-person partner self-expansion controlling for relationship satisfaction moderating the trajectory sexual desire



Note: “lin” indicates linear slope, “quad” indicates quadratic slope, † $p = .050$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. This effect was not significant when testing a model without relationship satisfaction.

Figure 5

Within-person partner self-expansion moderating the trajectory of women's sexual desire



Note: “lin” indicates linear slope, “quad” indicates quadratic slope, † $p = .050$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

General Discussion

Sexual desire plays a crucial role in both the initiation and maintenance of romantic relationships (Birnbaum & Muise, 2025) yet desire is also fragile and prone to decline. Such declines are linked to lower sexual and relationship satisfaction and increased risk of relationship dissolution (Birnbaum 2018; Birnbaum & Reis, 2019), highlighting the importance of identifying factors that help couples maintain desire over time. One promising factor is relational self-expansion—the sense of personal growth that arises from engaging in novel, challenging, or identity-broadening experiences with a partner (Aron & Aron, 1986; 1996; Aron et al., 2000). While both self-expansion and desire are thought to be high early in relationships and to decline over time (Aron et al., 2004; Aron et al., 2013), empirical work tracking these trajectories concurrently has been limited.

In the current study—the first, to my knowledge, to map the trajectories of sexual desire and self-expansion during the early years of a relationship—I followed couples from the first year together over an 18-month period, capturing their relationship progression up to approximately two and a half years together on average. Both sexual desire and self-expansion declined sharply in the first year of the study, followed by a noticeable leveling off in the second year, suggesting a plateau, aligning with theories that suggest a honeymoon phase precedes a more stable relational period. People generally high (vs. low) in self-expansion also reported greater sexual desire, and, in line with past research (Goss et al., 2022; Muise et al., 2019), when people experienced more self-expansion than usual for themselves, both they and their partner reported higher sexual desire. However, I did not find evidence that higher self-expansion buffered against declines in desire over time. Instead, for women specifically, a partner's self-expansion was associated with higher desire in general but a steeper decline overtime for the first

12 months of the study and modest increases overtime resuming between months 12 and 18. Theoretical implications, practical applications, limitations, and future directions of this work are discussed below.

Trajectory of Sexual Desire in the Early Years of a Relationship

Declines in sexual desire have been well documented in long-term romantic relationships (McNulty et al., 2019; Rosen et al., 2021; Schwenck et al., 2020), and a few longitudinal studies have extended these findings to early-stage relationships (Impett et al., 2008; Mizrahi et al., 2019). The current study replicates and extends past work by showing that desire declines significantly after the first year of a relationship and into the second year. Unlike previous studies, this research identified both linear and curvilinear (quadratic) patterns of decline—steeper during the first year of the study, followed by a leveling off in the second year. This pattern aligns with theories that suggest desire is typically high at early in relationships and but declines as novelty fades (Acevedo & Aron, 2009; Aubin & Heiman, 2004; Birnbaum, 2018). The slowing rate of decline suggests couples may enter a more stable period of desire after exiting the honeymoon period. Research on newlyweds—also known to have a honeymoon period—similarly shows high desire followed by a decline (McNulty et al., 2019), raising the possibility that specific transitions such as engagement, cohabitation, or marriage may temporarily boost desire before it diminishes. Likewise, cohabitating couples have higher sexual frequency (a potential behavioral indicator of desire) than married couples (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983), suggesting that moving in together may mark another peak in desire followed by decline. Future research should track couples through these transitions over longer timespans to examine whether desire rebounds or stabilizes across different stages of relationship development.

Consistent with prior research on early-stage romantic relationships (Impett et al., 2008; Mizrahi et al., 2019), gender did not significantly moderate trajectories of sexual desire in this study. The absence of gender differences may reflect the life stage of participants—most were child-free at baseline, and only a minority were cohabiting. Although 45% moved in together during the study, few had accrued enough time living together for factors that contribute to gender differences in desire, such as unequal division of household labor, to emerge. The heteronormativity theory of women’s low desire suggests that structural inequities in domestic and caregiving responsibilities disproportionately placed on women can reduce desire by increasing stress (van Anders et al., 2022). These structural conditions, well-documented in postpartum and long-term married couples (Harris et al., 2022), likely had not yet materialized in our sample, helping to explain the lack of gender-based differences in desire decline. Nonetheless, individual differences may still shape desire trajectories. For instance, Mizrahi et al. (2019) found that men higher (versus lower) in attachment anxiety experienced steeper declines in desire during the early years of a relationship (Mizrahi et al., 2019). Future work should examine how attachment styles and other vulnerability factors moderate changes in desire as couples transition from the honeymoon phase into more established relational stages. Taken together, my findings suggest that, during the first few years of dating, men and women experience comparable declines in sexual desire—perhaps before broader structural or relational dynamics begin to diverge by gender.

Low sexual desire has reliably been linked to lower sexual and relationship satisfaction and an increased risk of relationship dissolution (Birnbaum 2018; Birnbaum & Reis, 2019). However, much of this evidence comes from studies of couples in longer term relationships, limiting our understanding of the consequences of desire decline earlier in the relationship

trajectory—particularly as couples transition out of the honeymoon phase into more established partnerships. In the current study, approximately 40% of the sample dropped out over 18 months, and 12% explicitly reported breaking up. While we do not know whether low desire contributed to these breakups—or whether attrition was due to relationship dissolution—the data raise important questions. It is possible that in early-stage relationships, where structural commitments such as cohabitation, marriage, and parenting have not yet taken hold, low desire may be a more salient and destabilizing signal of relationship problems, making couples more likely to separate. Future research should directly test whether declines in desire during the early years of a relationship predict reductions in sexual and relationship satisfaction, commitment, and ultimately, relationship stability. Longitudinal designs that track couples through key transitions—such as cohabitation, parenthood, or marriage—would help clarify whether the consequences of low desire become more or less impactful over time and across relational contexts.

Trajectory of Self-Expansion in the Early Years of a Relationship

Overfamiliarity and boredom are commonly cited as key contributors to low sexual desire in long-term romantic relationships (Sims & Meana, 2010), suggesting that declining self-expansion over time may play a key role. Early in a relationship, self-expansion tends to occur naturally and effortlessly because every experience with a new partner can feel novel and exciting (Aron et al., 2004). However, partners become increasingly familiar with each other, resulting in fewer spontaneous opportunities for self-expansion (Aron et al., 2013). This makes the transition from the honeymoon phase to a more established relationship an ideal context for testing the key assumption of self-expansion theory that self-expansion naturally declines as relationships progress (Aron et al., 2013) and that this decline may, in turn, contribute to reduced

sexual desire (Carswell & Impett, 2021). The current study is the first to my knowledge to directly examine the trajectory of self-expansion over the early years of a romantic relationship. Prior work has documented negative associations between self-expansion and relationship length (Goss et al., 2022; Muise et al. 2019), and one study tracked self-expansion in new couples at two timepoints within the first year of the relationship, finding it remained high, although statistical tests were not conducted (Mattingly et al., 2019).

The current study showed that, much like desire, self-expansion declines significantly from the first year of a relationship over an 18-months period. The trajectory shows that self-expansion declined quickly during the first year of a relationship, but the decline slows down during the second year, consistent with a core proposition of self-expansion theory that self-expansion is initially high but wanes over time (Aron et al., 2013). However, because the decline was already underway at the first wave of data collection, it remains unclear exactly when the decline begins. It is possible that had couples been tracked from the very start of their relationship, an initial increase—or at least a stable period—of self-expansion might have been observed before the decline set in. Finally, gender did not moderate the trajectory of self-expansion, consistent with previous research showing that men and women are equally motivated to self-expand and experience similar associations between self-expansion and relationship outcomes (see review by Aron et al., 2022). The current findings extend this work by showing that self-expansion decreases at a similar rate for both men and women during the early years of romantic relationships.

Self-expansion is theorized to consist of two components: (1) the experience of novelty and excitement, and (2) the inclusion of the partner into one's self concept (Emery et al., under review). To examine whether these two components follow distinct trajectories over time, I

conducted exploratory analyses examining each separately. Results revealed that both novelty and excitement and expansion of one's self-concept declined over the course of the study. However, participants initially reported higher levels of novelty and excitement than self-concept expansion. Notably novelty and excitement declined more steeply, such that by the end of the study, levels of novelty and excitement were lower than those of self-concept expansion. This pattern suggests that feelings of novelty and excitement in the relationship may be especially susceptible to decline as couples transition out of the honeymoon phase—when self-expansion is likely occurring spontaneously and effortlessly—and into a more established phase of relationship. These findings align with prior research suggesting that sustained feelings of excitement in long-term relationships require active effort (Muisse et al., 2019). In contrast, the inclusion of the partner into one's self-concept may remain more stable, even as the thrill of novelty wanes.

These findings raise important questions about how couples interpret and respond to diminishing novelty and excitement in their relationships. On one hand, lower levels of novelty and excitement have been linked to relational boredom, which can contribute to declines in relationship satisfaction (Harasymchuk & Fehr, 2010; Emery et al., under review). On the other hand, couples may view this decline as a natural—and even reassuring—part of settling into a more stable stage of their relationship. If couples anticipate a reduction in novelty following the honeymoon phase, they may experience this shift as a sign of relational security rather than a loss, which could buffer against declines in relationship quality. In contrast, the inclusion of the partner into one's self concept declined more gradually over time. This slower trajectory may reflect the time it takes for partners to integrate each other's traits, experiences, and resources into their own identities (Aron & Aron, 1986; Emery et al., under review). According to self-

expansion theory, such integration is essential for future self-expansion to occur—without it, the accumulation of novel experiences could lead to overwhelm or confusion (Emery et al., under review). Thus, the steadier decline in self-concept expansion may signal a process of consolidation, as couples increasingly develop a shared identity or sense of “we-ness.” As partners’ identities become more intertwined, they may have fewer remaining opportunities to expand their self-concept through the relationship. To date, little research has examined the relational consequences of novelty and excitement versus self-concept expansion. These two components are often treated as interchangeable, but future work could meaningfully advance theory by considering whether specific relationship outcomes—such as passion, satisfaction, or commitment—are more strongly impacted by engaging in novel and exciting activities or by expanding one’s sense of self through the relationship.

Associations Between Self-Expansion and Desire

Past work shows that self-expansion is positively associated with sexual desire, suggesting it might buffer against desire declines during a period when desire typically wanes. Consistent with earlier work (Goss et al., 2022; Muise et al. 2019), I found that at timepoints when people reported increases in self-expansion (within person deviations), both they and their partner reported higher sexual desire. However, although boosts in both types of self-expansion were associated with a person’s own higher desire, the subcomponents on their own were no longer associated with partner desire. This might suggest that self-expanding experiences extend to a partner’s desire when the experience is novel *and* broadens the person’s self-concept or that it is more about the overall experience of self-expansion that extends to a partner’s desire rather than the specific components. In addition, to ensure that this association was not simply due to shared variance with relationship satisfaction (Muise et al., 2019), I reran all models with

relationship satisfaction as a covariate. The associations between self-expansion (and its subcomponents) and sexual desire remained significant, indicating that relationship satisfaction does not explain these effects. However, I did not find support for my prediction that people with higher levels of self-expansion—whether at the beginning of the study, on average across, or during periods when their self-expansion was above their own average—were buffered against the typical declines in desire over time.

There are several potential reasons for this null effect. First, the study was likely underpowered to detect smaller effects. Post hoc analyses for the minimum detectable standardized effect size given our sample size using guidelines outlined in Arend and Schafer (2019) determined adequate power to detect a cross-level interaction effect size of .32. The standardized effect size (using the formula $r = \sqrt{t^2/(t^2 + df)}$; see Overall & Hammond, 2013; Rosenthal & Rosnow, 2007) was .034 for baseline self-expansion, .046 for self-expansion across the study, and .032 for within person deviations in self-expansion, suggesting that larger samples—either through massive recruitment efforts or combining multiple datasets—are likely required to test the buffering of trajectories of desire over time. However, recruiting couples in early-stage relationships is challenging which is likely why very few studies have examined fledgling couples (Joel & Eastwick, 2018), as the average relationship length in longitudinal couples studies tends to be about 20 months at Time 1 (almost two years; Le et al., 2010). Indeed, new relationships are unstable, fleeting, and not-well-defined, which can make couples harder to locate, less willing to commit to multiyear studies, and more likely to dissolve mid-study (Joel & Eastwick, 2018). We evidenced similar challenges when collecting the sample for this study. After employing strong recruitment efforts for almost three years, we screened over

1400 potential couples and we enrolled 198 eligible couples into our study, and 40% did not complete the study.

Second, the null finding may reflect limitations of the analytical approach. The multilevel dyadic growth model tests moderation (i.e., whether self-expansion buffers the effect of time on desire), but it does not test whether *changes* in self-expansion predict *changes* in desire. Models such as Parallel-Process Latent Growth Curve Models (PP-LGCM; Cheong et al., 2003) or Dyadic Latent Change Score Models (D-LCS-M; Ledermann & Kenny, 2017) would be better suited for testing whether a slower erosion of self-expansion predicts a less steep decline in desire. The PP-LGCM estimates a latent intercepts and latent slopes for both self-expansion and desire. By allowing the slope of self-expansion to predict the slope of desire, this model can test whether individuals whose self-expansion declines more gradually also experience a less steep decline in desire, thereby providing evidence that sustained self-expansion mitigates decline in desire over the same time span. The D-LCS-M, in contrast, tests whether changes in self-expansion from one time point to the next predict corresponding changes in desire which would help determine directionality of effects. This type of model also incorporates both constant and proportional change components, enabling researchers to estimate the average decline in desire between timepoints while also capturing whether that decline slows or accelerates following increases in self-expansion. Both of these modeling approaches require larger sample sizes (a minimum of 200 couples; Ledermann & Kenny, 2017) to ensure adequate statistical power, highlighting the need for larger samples of early-stage couples in future research.

A third possibility is that the observed null effect reflects the true nature of the association between self-expansion and desire during this relationship period, such that people

with chronically high self-expansion, relative to others, do not sustain high desire over time. Rather, self-expansion may influence desire through contrast rather than constancy. Experiences of novelty and growth feel exciting precisely because they depart from everyday routine. Once these experiences become familiar or routine, partners may habituate, and the initial boost in desire associated with self-expansion may fade. A helpful analogy is a vacation: a week away from everyday life can enhance well-being, but living permanently in “vacation mode” leads to hedonic adaptation, and the benefits quickly diminish. The Rate of Change in Intimacy Model (Baumeister & Bratslavsky, 1999) offers theoretical support for this idea, proposing that passion is driven by rapid increases in intimacy rather than its stable presence. According to this model, passion increases are most likely to occur when intimacy is low or has plateaued—such as after a period of physical separation or conflict—followed by intimacy-promoting activities such as self-expanding experiences. Past empirical findings align with this view: while people in longer (vs. shorter) relationships report lower levels self-expansion, the positive effect of self-expansion on desire is stronger for people in longer relationships (Muise et al. 2019). One plausible explanation is that individuals in longer relationships, who typically report lower mean levels of self-expansion, may experience a greater contrast effect when their self-expansion increases above their usual level. This pattern is further supported by evidence from daily experience studies, which show lower average levels of self-expansion ($M_s = 3.07-3.86$), but greater variability ($SDs = 1.79-1.93$; Goss & Muise, 2022; Muise et al., 2019) compared to the current study ($M = 5.48, SD = 1.30$).

In addition to testing whether people’s own higher self-expansion buffered against declines in their own desire, I also tested whether it buffered against declines their partner’s declines. These analyses were exploratory, but past work shows that when people experience

higher-than-typical self-expansion, their partner reports higher sexual desire (Goss et al., 2022; Muise et al., 2019). Consistent with this prior work, I found that within-person increases in self-expansion shaped the trajectory of a partner's desire over time, but only after controlling for relationship satisfaction. When people reported self-expansion above their typical level, their partner reported higher desire but also showed steeper declines in desire across subsequent waves. This finding suggests a short-term boost in desire from a boost in self-expansion fades over time, ultimately resulting in a sharper downward trajectory, possibly reflecting a return to baseline after a brief elevation. However, this effect should be interpreted with caution, as it only emerged when relationship satisfaction was controlled. When two variables overlap conceptually or share measurement error, partialling one from the other can produce a spurious association (Joel et al., 2025). This is especially problematic in regression frameworks that assume no measurement error (such as multi-level-modeling) which can inflate Type-I error rates and threaten the validity of statistical conclusions (Joel et al., 2025). In the present data, self-expansion and relationship satisfaction were highly correlated and both were assessed using the same self-report method. Thus, the significant partner effect that appeared only after controlling for satisfaction may reflect statistical suppression rather than a true psychological process. Future studies should aim to replicate this finding using structural equation modelling frameworks that treat self-expansion and relationship satisfaction as latent variables. This approach would allow for the partitioning of true variance from shared measurement error, providing a more rigorous test of whether self-expansion exerts unique influence on a partner's sexual desire.

Given past work documenting gender differences in the trajectory of sexual desire (Graham et al., 2017, Klusmann, 2002, McNulty et al., 2019; Rosen et al., 2021), I also explored whether gender moderated the association between self-expansion and desire over time. For

women in particular, a partner's above-average self-expansion coincided with a boost in desire followed by a steeper drop from one time point to the next. Upon further examination, I found that this effect was driven by the novel and exciting component of self-expansion rather than the self-concept component, and the effect remained significant even after controlling for relationship satisfaction. These findings suggest that, in early relationships, women's desire may be especially sensitive to their partner's boosts in novelty and excitement—but that this boost is short-lived. Women's desire is often described as more responsive or context-dependent, as opposed to being spontaneous, especially compared to men's (Basson, 2000; Birnbaum & Laser-Brandt, 2002; Birnbaum et al., 2007). This suggests that relational cues arising from a partner's self-expansion—such as increased enthusiasm or energy—might increase women's desire. Self-expansion is also associated with approach motivation (i.e., the tendency to pursue positive outcomes in the relationship; Gable, 2006; Mattingly et al., 2012), which may manifest in behaviors that signal commitment and affection. When individuals perceive their partner as especially desirable, they tend to amplify mate-retention efforts such as offering lavish gifts, sincere compliments, and prioritizing the partner's needs (Buss & Duntley, 2011; Buss & Shackelford, 1997). Women report that feeling sexy, feeling that their partner finds them attractive, and perceiving that their partner is attentive are key to sustaining desire (Ferreira et al., 2014; Murray & Milhausen, 2012). These behaviors, which may be elicited during periods of heightened partner expansion, could make women feel attractive and valued and increase desire. Such behaviours may also signal investment and commitment, cues which—according to evolutionary theories of desire—are especially salient for women due to the higher reproductive costs of choosing a poor mate (Birnbaum et al., 2016; Buss, 1989). Supporting this assertion, one study found that women felt more desire when they perceived their partner as highly responsive

compared to men, though men also felt more desire for responsive partners (Birnbuam et al., 2016). Taken together, these findings highlight the potential importance of partner self-expansion in shaping women's sexual desire and highlight the need for future research to examine the mechanisms through which this effect occurs.

Limitations and Future Directions

The present study mapped the trajectories of sexual desire and self-expansion as couples transitioned from the honeymoon stage into a more established relationship. However, identifying relationship stages such as the honeymoon phase or the transition into an established relationship is inherently challenging, as these phases are often subjective or socially constructed rather than marked by discrete, observable events (e.g., moving in together, getting married, having children). Qualitative research work and theories of relationship development suggest that the honeymoon period typically lasts between 1 and 2.5 years (Acker & Davis, 1992; Baumeister & Bratslavsky, 1999; Tennov, 1979), after which couples are presumed to enter an established phase. However, this timeline is based largely on research from 30-50 years ago and lacks a strong empirical foundation. Indeed, attachment theory suggests that it takes approximately two years for partners to form a full attachment bond (Zeifman & Hazan, 2008), but apart from that, little is known about what defines an "established" relationship. Milestone events such as cohabitation, engagement, or marriage often occur after two-years mark, and their timing varies widely. In the current study, only 21% were living together at baseline, while 45% moved in during the 18-month study period suggesting increased commitment over time. However, these patterns may have been influenced by contextual factors, particularly the COVID pandemic, which likely accelerated the timeline for couples to move in together as it may have been difficult to them to see each other otherwise during the lockdown. To better understand

relationship progression and the development of commitment, it would be ideal to recruit people before they enter a romantic relationship (Joel & Eastwick, 2018)—an admittedly difficult task. However, recent innovations, such as researcher-developed dating apps such as Revel (Gordon, 2025), may offer a feasible avenue for such research. Tracking people from the pre-relationship stage onward would allow researchers to test whether a distinct honeymoon phase exists—characterized by heightened desire and intensity—and to identify the factors that accelerate or extend its duration.

Although the current study found that both sexual desire and self-expansion declined significantly over time, and that changes in self-expansion were associated with sexual desire, we did not assess whether these patterns varied based on individual differences. It is possible that some people are more sensitive to declines in desire or benefit more from self-expansion, such that the observed trajectories and associations may not generalize across individuals. For example, individuals who endorse sexual or relationship destiny beliefs (i.e., those who view successful relationships and sex lives as effortless and interpret challenges as signs of incompatibility), may be more likely to disengage from their relationship when desire declines and may be less inclined to invest effort into pursuing self-expansion over time (Knee, 2001; Maxwell et al., 2017). Even when people recognize that their relationship is in a rut—marked by heightened boredom—they often struggle to implement or benefit from strategies intended to rekindle connection (Harasymchuk et al., 2017, 2022). By contrast, people higher in growth beliefs (i.e., those who view work and effort as necessary for relationship maintenance; Knee, 2001; Maxwell et al., 2017) and those who are approach-motivated (i.e., oriented towards positive relationship outcomes such as intimacy and connection; Gable, 2006) may be more likely to plan self-expanding activities and reap greater benefits from them (Mattingly et al.,

2019; Walker et al., 2023). Identifying the individual differences that moderate these processes is an important next step. Doing so would help clarify whether certain individuals are more vulnerable to declines in desire and self-expansion and whether others are better equipped to use self-expansion as a protective factor against such normative declines.

The current findings may not generalize to people with more diverse sexual orientations, relationship types, or cultural backgrounds. Most couples were man–woman pairs, with both partners primarily identifying as heterosexual, making it unclear whether the findings generalize to same-gender couples or those in which one or both partners identify as sexual minorities. Some evidence suggests individuals in same-gender relationships report similar or even higher levels of desire than those in man-woman relationships (Holmberg & Blair, 2009). Other research has shown that gay couples report more frequent sexual activity—potentially reflecting higher desire—than heterosexual couples, whereas lesbian couples have sex less frequently (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983). These patterns reflect the possibility that gender differences in sexual desire observed in longer-term relationships—where men typically report higher desire than women (Graham et al., 2017; Klusmann, 2002; McNulty et al., 2019; Murray & Milhausen, 2012)—may be amplified in same-gender couples. For instance, gay men may be more likely to maintain higher desire over time, whereas lesbian women may experience steeper declines. Self-expansion may also have different implications for desire in same-gender relationships. In the current study, I found that women’s desire, but not men’s, benefited from their partner’s self-expansion. This suggests that self-expansion might be especially important for maintaining desire in lesbian relationships, a possibility that could be tested in future work.

The current sample was predominantly monogamous, and desire trajectories may differ among people in other relationship structures such as consensually non-monogamous (CNM)

relationships, which are more common among sexual minority individuals (Hauptert et al., 2017) CNM relationships may offer additional opportunities for self-expansion through novel experiences with multiple partners, which could help sustain desire over time. Notably, key motivations for engaging in CNM relationships—such as desire for novelty, variety, and self-discovery—mirror core components of self-expansion (Wood et al., 2021), suggesting that people in CNM relationships may have more opportunities for self-expansion. Future research could examine trajectories of self-expansion and desire across different relationship structures. In particular, CNM relationships offer a unique opportunity to test whether self-expansion in one relationship can have spillover effects by enhancing desire in other concurrent relationships.

A key critique of relationship science is its overreliance on samples composed primarily of White participants from Western societies, which limits the generalizability of findings to relationships in other cultural contexts (Joel et al., 2025). Although approximately 50% of participants in the current study identified as a person of colour or minoritized racial identity, all participants were living in Canada or the U.S. Thus, the cultural values shaping their relationships were likely rooted in Western norms. For example, the emphasis on “date nights”—presumably one context for self-expanding activities—is a concept prominent in Western relationship maintenance discourse (Gottman et al., 2019), but may be less emphasized in non-Western cultures. Western societies are typically characterized by high relational mobility in which individuals are free to choose romantic partners based on preferences that serve their personal satisfaction (Yuki & Schug, 2012). Within this context, maintaining high sexual desire may be particularly valued. In contrast, in low relational mobility societies, such as India, arranged marriages are common, and romantic connection and personal growth through self-expansion may be less prioritized (Allendorf & Pandian, 2016; Roland, 1988). In these contexts,

relationships are often shaped by family and social obligations rather than personal choice or attraction, which may result in different trajectories of desire and self-expansion. Cultural norms that prioritize interdependence and social harmony may further reduce the value placed on novelty and excitement—two key features of self-expansion in Western contexts. Taken together, these differences suggest that the meaning and function of self-expansion, as well as its link to sexual desire, may vary across cultural contexts. Future research should examine how these processes unfold in non-Western societies, where relational goals and motivations may differ substantially.

Implications for Theory and Practice

The current study provides the first longitudinal evidence for a foundational tenet of self-expansion theory—that self-expansion is initially high and declines over time (Aron et al., 2013). It also distinguishes the trajectories of the theory’s two core components: novelty/excitement and the inclusion of the partner in the self. Notably, novelty and excitement declined more steeply than inclusion of the partner in the self, suggesting novelty may be especially susceptible to erosion in the early years of a relationship. Consistent with past research, both between- and within-person increases in self-expansion associated with higher sexual desire (Goss et al., 2022; Muise et al., 2019; Raposo et al., 2021), reinforcing the idea that sexual dynamics are shaped not only by sexual factors but also by broader relational processes. However, neither early nor sustained self-expansion buffered against the normative decline in desire, possibly because such declines are normative during this stage of relationships. A novel gender difference emerged such that partners’ self-expansion predicted short-term boosts in women’s desire but sharper declines over time—an effect not observed in studies of longer-term couples. This finding

underscores the potential importance of considering relationship stage when interpreting gendered associations between self-expansion and desire.

The findings suggest several practical implications for couples and practitioners. First, declines in both desire and self-expansion likely reflect a normative transition out of the early, honeymoon phase of a relationship and are not necessarily a warning sign of relationship deterioration. Framing these changes as expected rather than problematic may help couples avoid unnecessary distress. Second, because higher self-expansion is linked to greater desire, couples may benefit from intentionally introducing activities that provide novelty and excitement—such as learning a new hobby together—once spontaneous novelty and excitement begin to naturally wane. Practitioners might offer psychoeducation about normative desire trajectories in relationships, and incorporate structured self-expansion exercises (e.g., trying something new as a couple) as concrete tools to support couples in maintaining their relationship over time.

Conclusion

In sum, this study provides the first empirical evidence of how both sexual desire and relational self-expansion change over the early years of a romantic relationship. Across 18 months of dating, desire and self-expansion declined rapidly before beginning to level off, a pattern observed for both men and women. These findings provide evidence for a key prediction of self-expansion theory that novelty peaks early in a relationship and then ebbs over time. Although higher self-expansion was associated with higher desire at both the between and within-person levels, chronically elevated self-expansion did not protect against the overall decline in desire. This may reflect either a true lack of a buffering effect or insufficient statistical power. Future work should aim to follow couples from the onset of their relationship over a longer period of time, use analytic models that test parallel changes between desire and self-

expansion, and recruit more sexually diverse, non-Western and non-monogamous samples to test whether these trajectories and mechanisms generalise across relationship structures and cultural contexts.

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Appendix A

Relational Self-expansion (Self-Expansion Questionnaire (SEQ); Lewandowski & Aron, 2002)

Scale: 1 = “not very much” to 7 = “very much so”

1. Has being with your partner resulted in you having new experiences?
2. Have you felt a greater awareness of things because of your partner?
3. Has being with your partner expanded your sense of the kind of person you are?
4. Has your partner provided you with a source of excitement?
5. Do you feel you have gained a larger perspective on life because of your partner?
6. Has your partner increased your knowledge?

Sexual Desire (Sexual Desire Inventory (SDI); Moyano et al., 2017)

1. During the last month, how often would you have liked to engage in sexual activity with your partner (for example, touching each other’s genitals, giving or receiving oral stimulation, intercourse, etc)?
 - a. 1= “not at all”, 2 = “once a month”, 3= “once every two weeks”, 4 = “once a week”, 5 = “twice a week”, 6= “3 to 4 times a week”, 7 = “once a day”, 8 = “more than once a day”
2. “During the last month, how often have you had sexual thoughts involving your partner?” (1-8; same options as #1)
3. “When you have sexual thoughts, how strong is your desire to engage in sexual behaviour with a partner?” (0 = “no desire” to 8 = “strong desire”)
4. “How strong is your desire to engage in sexual activity with a partner?” (0-8; same options as #3)

5. “How important is it for you to fulfill your sexual desire through activity with a partner?”
(0-8; same options as #3)
6. “Compared to other people of your age and sex, how would you rate your desire to behave sexually with a partner?” (0-8; same options as #3)

Relationship Satisfaction (Perceived Relationship Quality Components (PRQC) Inventor;
Fletcher et al., 2000)

Scale: 1 = “not at all” to 7 = “extremely”

1. How satisfied are you with your relationship?
2. How content are you with your relationship?
3. How happy are you with your relationship?

Supplemental Materials

Supplemental Tables

Table S1

Attrition sensitivity analyses

Parameter	Baseline		3 months		6 months		9 months		12 months	
	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>
FSFI desire	0.01(0.04)	.800	-0.01(0.04)	.900	-0.01(0.05)	.779	-0.06(0.06)	.298	-0.03(0.08)	.763
SDI desire	0.29(0.34)	.384	-0.25(0.37)	.499	0.05(0.43)	.902	-0.75(0.52)	.150	-1.32(0.67)	.050
Self-expansion	0.04(0.04)	.362	0.08(0.05)	.101	-0.01(0.06)	.827	0.03(0.08)	.691	-0.02(0.11)	.833
Relationship satisfaction	0.06(0.03)	.090	0.06(0.04)	.146	0.01(0.05)	.880	0.04(0.07)	.613	0.11(0.08)	.196
Relationship length	0.01(0.09)	.908	0.01(0.10)	.962	-0.003(0.08)	.969	0.01(0.10)	.934	0.11(0.13)	.398
Age	-0.23(0.26)	.378	-0.24(0.26)	.348	-0.43(0.06)	.064	-0.35(0.25)	.168	-0.02(0.28)	.933

Note: FSFI = Female Sexual Function Index, SDI = Sexual Desire Inventory

Table S2*Trajectories of sexual desire (measured by the Sexual Desire Inventory) over time*

Parameter	Sexual desire		Sexual desire (controlling for relationship satisfaction)	
	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>
Intercept	36.68(0.50)	<.001	36.39(0.47)	<.001
Time (linear)	-0.39(0.07)	<.001	-0.31(0.07)	<.001
Time ² (quadratic)	0.008(0.004)	.028	0.005(0.004)	.147
Relationship satisfaction	—	—	1.89(0.18)	<.001

Table S3

Gender differences in the trajectory of sexual desire (measured by the Sexual Desire Inventory) over time

Parameter	Sexual desire x gender		Sexual desire x men		Sexual desire x women	
	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>
Intercept	—	—	38.11(0.58)	<.001	36.03(0.54)	<.001
Time	0.12(0.06)	.063	-0.24(0.10)	.011	-0.48(0.09)	<.001
Time ²	-0.004(0.003)	.304	0.003(0.005)	.538	0.01(0.005)	.030

Table S4

Actor between and within person self-expansion moderating the linear trajectory of sexual desire (measured by the Female Sexual Function Index) over time

Parameter	Self-expansion		Self-expansion controlling for relationship satisfaction		Baseline self-expansion		Baseline self-expansion controlling for relationship satisfaction	
	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>
Intercept	3.87(0.04)	<.001	3.87(0.04)	<.001	3.90(0.04)	<.001	3.88(0.04)	<.001
Time	-0.02(0.003)	<.001	-0.02(0.003)	<.001	-0.03(0.003)	<.001	-0.03(0.003)	<.001
Between person self-expansion	0.27(0.04)	<.001	0.22(0.04)	<.001	0.22(0.04)	<.001	0.16(0.04)	<.001
Within person self-expansion	0.12(0.03)	<.001	0.08(0.03)	.008	—	—	—	—
Time x Between person self-expansion	-0.002(0.003)	.576	-0.002(0.003)	.465	-0.004(0.003)	.177	-0.003(0.003)	.206
Time x Within person self-expansion	-0.001(0.003)	.687	0.00(0.003)	.896	—	—	—	—

Table S5

Actor between and within person self-expansion moderating the linear and curvilinear trajectory of sexual desire (measured by the Female Sexual Function Index) over time

Parameter	Self-expansion		Self-expansion controlling for relationship satisfaction		Baseline Self- expansion		Baseline self- expansion controlling for relationship satisfaction	
	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>
Intercept	3.90(0.05)	<.001	3.90(0.05)	<.001	3.95(0.05)	<.001	3.92(0.05)	<.001
Time	-0.04(0.008)	<.001	-0.04(0.008)	<.001	-0.05(0.008)	<.001	-0.04(0.008)	<.001
Time ²	0.001(0.00)	0.018	0.001(0.00)	0.031	0.001(0.00)	0.003	0.001(0.00)	0.017
Between person self-expansion	0.29(0.05)	<.001	0.24(0.05)	<.001	0.23(0.04)	<.001	0.17(0.04)	<.001
Within person self-expansion	0.13(0.04)	0.001	0.10(0.04)	0.015	————	————	————	————
Time x Between person self-expansion	-0.009(0.008)	0.293	-0.01(0.008)	0.155	-0.008(0.008)	0.274	-0.007(0.008)	0.331
Time ² x Between person self-expansion	0.00(0.00)	0.367	0.001(0.00)	0.217	0.00(0.00)	0.506	0.00(0.00)	0.574
Time x Within person self-expansion	-0.01(0.01)	0.238	-0.01(0.01)	0.297	————	————	————	————
Time ² x Within person self-expansion	0.001(0.001)	0.203	0.001(0.001)	0.239	————	————	————	————

Table S6

Actor and partner between and within person self-expansion moderating the linear trajectory of sexual desire (measured by the Female Sexual Function Index) over time

Parameter	Self-expansion		Self-expansion controlling for relationship satisfaction		Baseline self- expansion		Baseline self- expansion controlling for relationship satisfaction	
	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>
Intercept	3.86(0.04)	<.001	3.86(0.04)	<.001	3.90(0.04)	<.001	3.88(0.04)	<.001
Time	-0.02(0.003)	<.001	-0.02(0.003)	<.001	-0.03(0.003)	<.001	-0.03(0.003)	<.001
Actor between person self-expansion	0.27(0.04)	<.001	0.22(0.05)	<.001	0.20(0.04)	<.001	0.15(0.04)	<.001
Partner between person self-expansion	0.03(0.04)	.557	0.02(0.04)	.719	0.07(0.04)	.095	0.06(0.04)	.190
Actor within person self-expansion	0.10(0.03)	.002	0.07(0.03)	.035	————	————	————	————
Partner within person self-expansion	0.06(0.03)	.079	0.05(0.03)	.095	————	————	————	————
Time x actor between person self-expansion	-0.001(0.003)	.646	-0.002(0.003)	.528	-0.003(0.003)	.219	-0.003(0.003)	.249
Time x partner between person self-expansion	0.001(0.003)	.793	0.001(0.003)	.784	-0.002(0.003)	.544	-0.002(0.003)	.543
Time x actor within person self-expansion	0.00(0.003)	.905	0.00(0.003)	.944	————	————	————	————
Time x partner within person self-expansion	-0.003(0.003)	.311	-0.003(0.003)	.290	————	————	————	————

Table S7

Actor between and within person self-expansion moderating the linear trajectory of sexual desire (measured by the Sexual Desire Inventory) over time

Parameter	Self-expansion		Self-expansion controlling for relationship satisfaction		Baseline self- expansion		Baseline self- expansion controlling for relationship satisfaction	
	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>
Intercept	36.03(0.45)	<.001	36.00(0.44)	<.001	36.40(0.43)	<.001	36.22(0.43)	<.001
Time	-0.20(0.03)	<.001	-0.20(0.03)	<.001	-0.25(0.03)	<.001	-0.23(0.03)	<.001
Between person self-expansion	2.57(0.39)	<.001	1.96(0.40)	<.001	2.42(0.36)	<.001	1.83(0.36)	<.001
Within person self-expansion	1.30(0.25)	<.001	0.90(0.25)	<.001	—	—	—	—
Time x Between person self-expansion	-0.003(0.02)	.911	-0.009(0.02)	.708	-0.04(0.02)	.062	-0.04(0.02)	.074
Time x Within person self-expansion	-0.004(0.02)	.874	0.006(0.02)	.806	—	—	—	—

Table S8

Actor between and within person self-expansion moderating the linear and curvilinear trajectory of sexual desire (measured by the Sexual Desire Inventory) over time

Parameter	Self-expansion		Self-expansion controlling for relationship satisfaction		Baseline self- expansion		Baseline self- expansion controlling for relationship satisfaction	
	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>
Intercept	36.20(0.47)	<.001	36.13(0.47)	<.001	36.70(0.45)	<.001	36.42(0.45)	<.001
Time	-0.29(0.07)	<.001	-0.27(0.07)	<.001	-0.39(0.07)	<.001	-0.32(0.07)	<.001
Time ²	0.006(0.004)	.124	0.005(0.004)	.207	0.008(0.004)	.027	0.005(0.004)	.129
Between person self-expansion	2.55(0.42)	<.001	2.01(0.42)	<.001	2.47(0.39)	<.001	1.87(0.38)	<.001
Within person self-expansion	1.47(0.33)	<.001	1.08(0.33)	.001	————	————	————	————
Time x Between person self-expansion	0.02(0.07)	.808	-0.02(0.07)	.787	-0.06(0.06)	.305	-0.05(0.06)	.388
Time ² x Between person self-expansion	-0.001(0.004)	.724	0.00(0.003)	.917	0.001(0.003)	.715	0.001(0.003)	.830
Time x Within person self-expansion	-0.11(0.09)	.203	-0.09(0.09)	.285	————	————	————	————
Time ² x Within person self-expansion	0.007(0.005)	.151	0.006(0.005)	.195	————	————	————	————

Table S9

Actor and partner between and within person self-expansion moderating the linear trajectory of sexual desire (measured by the Sexual Desire Inventory) over time

Parameter	Self-expansion		Self-expansion controlling for relationship satisfaction		Baseline self- expansion		Baseline self- expansion controlling for relationship satisfaction	
	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>
Intercept	36.00(0.45)	<.001	35.97(0.45)	<.001	36.37(0.43)	<.001	36.20(0.42)	<.001
Time	-0.18(0.03)	<.001	-0.18(0.03)	<.001	-0.25(0.03)	<.001	-0.23(0.03)	<.001
Actor between person self-expansion	2.51(0.39)	<.001	1.99(0.40)	<.001	2.44(0.36)	<.001	1.86(0.36)	<.001
Partner between person self-expansion	0.22(0.39)	.581	0.11(0.39)	.782	0.84(0.36)	.021	0.64(0.36)	.073
Actor within person self-expansion	1.17(0.25)	<.001	0.83(0.26)	.001	————	————	————	————
Partner within person self-expansion	0.41(0.25)	.102	0.39(0.25)	.124	————	————	————	————
Time x actor between person self-expansion	0.02(0.03)	.520	0.009(0.03)	.712	-0.04(0.02)	.060	-0.04(0.02)	.072
Time x partner between person self-expansion	-0.02(0.03)	.393	-0.02(0.03)	.409	-0.01(0.02)	.540	-0.01(0.02)	.628
Time x actor within person self-expansion	0.003(0.03)	.905	0.01(0.03)	.699	————	————	————	————
Time x partner within person self-expansion	0.006(0.03)	.803	0.005(0.03)	.836	————	————	————	————

Table S10

Actor and partner between and within person self-expansion moderating the linear and curvilinear trajectory of sexual desire (measured by the Sexual Desire Inventory) over time

Parameter	Self-expansion		Self-expansion controlling for relationship satisfaction		Baseline self- expansion		Baseline self- expansion controlling for relationship satisfaction	
	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>
Intercept	36.07(0.48)	<.001	36.01(0.48)	<.001	36.68(0.45)	<.001	36.41(0.45)	<.001
Time	-0.24(0.07)	.001	-0.22(0.07)	.002	-0.39(0.07)	<.001	-0.32(0.07)	<.001
Time ²	0.004(0.004)	.323	0.003(0.004)	.434	0.008(0.004)	.025	0.006(0.004)	.118
Actor between person self-expansion	2.69(0.42)	<.001	2.21(0.42)	<.001	2.56(0.38)	<.001	1.96(0.38)	<.001
Partner between person self-expansion	-0.03(0.42)	.949	-0.10(0.41)	.801	0.56(0.39)	.151	0.41(0.38)	.278
Actor within person self-expansion	1.49(0.34)	<.001	1.14(0.34)	<.001	—	—	—	—
Partner within person self-expansion	0.35(0.34)	.292	0.35(0.33)	.296	—	—	—	—
Time x Actor between person self-expansion	-0.05(0.07)	.453	-0.08(0.07)	.287	-0.10(0.06)	.131	-0.08(0.06)	.196
Time x Partner between person self-expansion	0.10(0.07)	.187	0.08(0.07)	.243	0.12(0.07)	.075	0.10(0.06)	.136
Time x Actor within person self-expansion	-0.14(0.09)	.109	-0.12(0.09)	.160	—	—	—	—

Parameter	Self-expansion		Self-expansion controlling for relationship satisfaction		Baseline self- expansion		Baseline self- expansion controlling for relationship satisfaction	
	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>
Time x Partner within person self-expansion	-0.01(0.09)	.871	-0.02(0.09)	.856	—	—	—	—
Time ² x Actor between person self-expansion	0.004(0.004)	.332	0.005(0.004)	.224	0.003(0.003)	.367	0.002(0.003)	.487
Time ² x Partner between person self-expansion	- 0.007(0.004)	.082	- 0.006(0.004)	.118	- 0.008(0.004)	.032	- 0.006(0.003)	.075
Time ² x Actor within person self-expansion	0.009(0.005)	.075	0.008(0.005)	.105	—	—	—	—
Time ² x Partner within person self-expansion	0.002(0.005)	.696	0.002(0.005)	.712	—	—	—	—

Table S11

Actor between and within person exciting self-expansion moderating the linear trajectory of sexual desire (measured by the Female Sexual Function Index) over time

Parameter	Exciting self-expansion		Exciting self-expansion controlling for relationship satisfaction		Baseline exciting self- expansion		Baseline exciting self- expansion controlling for relationship satisfaction	
	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>
Intercept	3.87(0.04)	<.001	3.87(0.04)	<.001	3.90(0.04)	<.001	3.88(0.04)	<.001
Time	-0.02(0.003)	<.001	-0.02(0.003)	<.001	-0.03(0.003)	<.001	-0.03(0.003)	<.001
Between person self-expansion	0.26(0.04)	<.001	0.21(0.04)	<.001	0.23(0.04)	<.001	0.17(0.04)	<.001
Within person self-expansion	0.10(0.03)	<.001	0.07(0.03)	.016	—	—	—	—
Time x Between person self-expansion	0.00(0.003)	.900	0.00(0.003)	.938	-0.004(0.003)	.174	-0.003(0.003)	.252
Time x Within person self-expansion	-0.002(0.003)	.352	-0.002(0.003)	.544	—	—	—	—

Table S12

Actor between and within person exciting self-expansion moderating the linear and curvilinear trajectory of sexual desire (measured by the Female Sexual Function Index) over time

Parameter	Exciting self-expansion		Exciting self-expansion controlling for relationship satisfaction		Baseline exciting self- expansion		Baseline exciting self- expansion controlling for relationship satisfaction	
	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>
Intercept	3.87(0.04)	<.001	3.87(0.04)	<.001	3.90(0.04)	<.001	3.88(0.04)	<.001
Time	-0.02(0.003)	<.001	-0.02(0.003)	<.001	-0.03(0.003)	<.001	-0.03(0.003)	<.001
Between person self-expansion	0.26(0.04)	<.001	0.21(0.04)	<.001	0.23(0.04)	<.001	0.17(0.04)	<.001
Within person self-expansion	0.10(0.03)	<.001	0.07(0.03)	.016	——	——	——	——
Time x Between person self-expansion	0.00(0.003)	.900	0.00(0.003)	.938	-0.004(0.003)	.174	-0.003(0.003)	.252
Time x Within person self-expansion	-0.002(0.003)	.352	-0.002(0.003)	.544	——	——	——	——

Table S13

Actor and partner between and within person exciting self-expansion moderating the linear trajectory of sexual desire (measured by the Female Sexual Function Index) over time

Parameter	Exciting self-expansion		Exciting self-expansion controlling for relationship satisfaction		Baseline exciting self-expansion		Baseline exciting self-expansion controlling for relationship satisfaction	
	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>
Intercept	3.86(0.04)	<.001	3.85(0.04)	<.001	3.89(0.04)	<.001	3.88(0.04)	<.001
Time	-0.02(0.003)	<.001	-0.02(0.003)	<.001	-0.03(0.003)	<.001	-0.03(0.003)	<.001
Between person self-expansion	0.25(0.04)	<.001	0.20(0.05)	<.001	0.20(0.04)	<.001	0.15(0.04)	<.001
Partner between person self-expansion	0.05(0.04)	.253	0.04(0.04)	.391	0.08(0.04)	.057	0.07(0.04)	.109
Within person self-expansion	0.09(0.03)	.003	0.06(0.03)	.055	————	————	————	————
Partner within person self-expansion	0.05(0.03)	.075	0.05(0.03)	.100	————	————	————	————
Time x Between person self-expansion	0.001(0.003)	.858	-0.0001(0.003)	.996	-0.003(0.003)	.264	-0.003(0.003)	.350
Time x Partner between person self-expansion	0.001(0.003)	.741	0.001(0.003)	.712	-0.003(0.003)	.320	-0.002(0.003)	.384
Time x Within person self-expansion	-0.002(0.003)	.466	-0.001(0.003)	.612	————	————	————	————
Time x Partner within person self-expansion	-0.002(0.003)	.378	-0.002(0.003)	.368	————	————	————	————

Table S14

Actor and partner between and within person exciting self-expansion moderating the linear and curvilinear trajectory of sexual desire (measured by the Female Sexual Function Index) over time

Parameter	Exciting self-expansion		Exciting self-expansion controlling for relationship satisfaction		Baseline exciting self- expansion		Baseline exciting self- expansion controlling for relationship satisfaction	
	<i>b</i> (<i>se</i>)	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i> (<i>se</i>)	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i> (<i>se</i>)	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i> (<i>se</i>)	<i>p</i>
Intercept	3.87(0.05)	<.001	3.86(0.05)	<.001	3.94(0.05)	<.001	3.92(0.04)	<.001
Time	-0.03(0.009)	<.001	-0.03(0.009)	<.001	-0.05(0.008)	<.001	-0.04(0.008)	<.001
Time ²	0.001(0.00)	.135	0.001(0.00)	.158	0.001(0.00)	.003	0.001(0.00)	.015
Actor between person self-expansion	0.28(0.05)	<.001	0.24(0.05)	<.001	0.21(0.04)	<.001	0.16(0.04)	<.001
Partner between person self-expansion	0.03(0.05)	.479	0.02(0.05)	.620	0.06(0.04)	.159	0.05(0.04)	.265
Actor within person self-expansion	0.12(0.04)	.002	0.09(0.04)	.018	—	—	—	—
Partner within person self-expansion	0.07(0.04)	.077	0.06(0.04)	.093	—	—	—	—
Time x Actor between person self-expansion	-0.01(0.009)	.210	-0.01(0.009)	.139	-0.007(0.008)	.408	-0.006(0.008)	.475
Time x Partner between person self-expansion	0.01(0.009)	.241	0.01(0.009)	.280	0.005(0.008)	.538	0.006(0.008)	.479
Time x Actor within person self-expansion	-0.02(0.01)	.054	-0.02(0.01)	.072	—	—	—	—
Time x Partner within person self-expansion	-0.02(0.01)	.116	-0.02(0.01)	.122	—	—	—	—

Parameter	Exciting self-expansion		Exciting self-expansion controlling for relationship satisfaction		Baseline exciting self- expansion		Baseline exciting self- expansion controlling for relationship satisfaction	
	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>
Time ² x Actor between person self-expansion	0.001(0.001)	.180	0.001(0.001)	.127	0.00(0.00)	.624	0.00(0.00)	.664
Time ² x Partner between person self-expansion	-0.001(0.001)	.247	-0.001(0.00)	.294	0.00(0.00)	.309	0.00(0.00)	.283
Time ² x Actor within person self-expansion	0.001(0.001)	.055	0.001(0.001)	.066	———	———	———	———

Table S15

Actor between and within person exciting self-expansion moderating the linear trajectory of sexual desire (measured by the Sexual Desire Inventory) over time

Parameter	Exciting self-expansion		Exciting self-expansion controlling for relationship satisfaction		Baseline exciting self- expansion		Baseline exciting self- expansion controlling for relationship satisfaction	
	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>
Intercept	35.97(0.44)	<.001	35.96(0.44)	<.001	36.37(0.43)	<.001	36.20(0.42)	<.001
Time	-0.20(0.03)	<.001	-0.19(0.03)	<.001	-0.25(0.03)	<.001	-0.23(0.03)	<.001
Between person self-expansion	2.49(0.39)	<.001	1.88(0.39)	<.001	2.41(0.36)	<.001	1.81(0.35)	<.001
Within person self-expansion	1.28(0.23)	<.001	0.90(0.23)	<.001	—	—	—	—
Time x Between person self-expansion	0.01(0.02)	.624	0.005(0.02)	.816	-0.05(0.02)	.033	-0.04(0.02)	.059
Time x Within person self-expansion	-0.02(0.02)	.281	-0.01(0.02)	.549	—	—	—	—

Table S16

Actor between and within person exciting self-expansion moderating the linear and curvilinear trajectory of sexual desire (measured by the Sexual Desire Inventory) over time

Parameter	Exciting self-expansion		Exciting self-expansion controlling for relationship satisfaction		Baseline exciting self- expansion		Baseline exciting self- expansion controlling for relationship satisfaction	
	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>
Intercept	36.07(0.47)	<.001	36.03(0.47)	<.001	36.67(0.45)	<.001	36.40(0.44)	<.001
Time	-0.26(0.07)	<.001	-0.24(0.07)	<.001	-0.39(0.07)	<.001	-0.32(0.07)	<.001
Time ²	0.004(0.004)	.306	0.003(0.004)	.406	0.008(0.004)	.027	0.005(0.004)	.129
Between person self-expansion	2.41(0.41)	<.001	1.86(0.41)	<.001	2.40(0.38)	<.001	1.79(0.37)	<.001
Within person self-expansion	1.41(0.31)	<.001	1.04(0.31)	<.001	————	————	————	————
Time x Between person self-expansion	0.06(0.07)	.374	0.03(0.07)	.699	-0.04(0.06)	.488	-0.03(0.06)	.642
Time ² x Between person self-expansion	-0.003(0.004)	.420	-0.001(0.003)	.719	0.00(0.003)	.921	-0.001(0.003)	.797
Time x Within person self-expansion	-0.11(0.08)	.172	-0.09(0.08)	.249	————	————	————	————
Time ² x Within person self-expansion	0.005(0.004)	.213	0.005(0.004)	.261	————	————	————	————

Table S17

Actor and partner between and within person exciting self-expansion moderating the linear trajectory of sexual desire (measured by the Sexual Desire Inventory) over time

Parameter	Exciting self-expansion		Exciting self-expansion controlling for relationship satisfaction		Baseline exciting self-expansion		Baseline exciting self-expansion controlling for relationship satisfaction	
	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>
Intercept	35.92(0.44)	<.001	35.90(0.44)	<.001	36.32(0.42)	<.001	36.16(0.42)	<.001
Time	-0.18(0.03)	<.001	-0.17(0.03)	<.001	-0.25(0.03)	<.001	-0.23(0.03)	<.001
Actor between person self-expansion	2.38(0.39)	<.001	1.87(0.39)	<.001	2.36(0.35)	<.001	1.80(0.35)	<.001
Partner between person self-expansion	0.68(0.39)	.080	0.55(0.38)	.155	1.00(0.36)	.006	0.82(0.35)	.020
Actor within person self-expansion	1.12(0.23)	<.001	0.81(0.24)	<.001	————	————	————	————
Partner within person self-expansion	0.41(0.23)	.077	0.37(0.23)	.106	————	————	————	————
Time x actor between person self-expansion	0.03(0.02)	.205	0.02(0.02)	.317	-0.05(0.02)	.046	-0.04(0.02)	.074
Time x partner between person self-expansion	-0.03(0.02)	.233	-0.03(0.02)	.260	-0.03(0.02)	.209	-0.02(0.02)	.326
Time x actor within person self-expansion	-0.02(0.02)	.433	-0.01(0.02)	.639	————	————	————	————
Time x partner within person self-expansion	0.006(0.02)	.781	0.006(0.02)	.789	————	————	————	————

Table S18

Actor and partner between and within person exciting self-expansion moderating the linear and curvilinear trajectory of sexual desire (measured by the Sexual Desire Inventory) over time

Parameter	Exciting self-expansion		Exciting self-expansion controlling for relationship satisfaction		Baseline exciting self- expansion		Baseline exciting self- expansion controlling for relationship satisfaction	
	<i>b</i> (<i>se</i>)	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i> (<i>se</i>)	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i> (<i>se</i>)	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i> (<i>se</i>)	<i>p</i>
Intercept	35.88(0.48)	<.001	35.84(0.48)	<.001	36.64(0.44)	<.001	36.38(0.44)	<.001
Time	-0.19(0.07)	.010	-0.18(0.07)	.014	-0.39(0.07)	<.001	-0.32(0.07)	<.001
Time ²	0.001(0.004)	.720	0.001(0.004)	.804	0.008(0.004)	.022	0.006(0.004)	.108
Actor between person self-expansion	2.50(0.42)	<.001	2.03(0.42)	<.001	2.42(0.38)	<.001	1.85(0.37)	<.001
Partner between person self-expansion	0.48(0.41)	.252	0.36(0.41)	.376	0.74(0.38)	.054	0.58(0.38)	.123
Actor within person self-expansion	1.42(0.32)	<.001	1.10(0.32)	<.001	—	—	—	—
Partner within person self-expansion	0.43(0.31)	.167	0.39(0.31)	.208	—	—	—	—
Time x Actor between person self-expansion	-0.009(0.07)	.900	-0.03(0.07)	.647	-0.08(0.07)	.223	-0.06(0.06)	.309
Time x Partner between person self-expansion	0.07(0.07)	.312	0.07(0.07)	.358	0.09(0.07)	.167	0.09(0.06)	.153
Time x Actor within person self-expansion	-0.14(0.08)	.078	-0.13(0.08)	.112	—	—	—	—
Time x Partner within person self-expansion	-0.04(0.08)	.659	-0.03(0.08)	.716	—	—	—	—

Parameter	Exciting self-expansion		Exciting self-expansion controlling for relationship satisfaction		Baseline exciting self- expansion		Baseline exciting self- expansion controlling for relationship satisfaction	
	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>
Time ² x Actor between person self-expansion	0.002(0.004)	.598	0.003(0.004)	.428	0.002(0.004)	.574	0.001(0.003)	.674
Time ² x Partner between person self-expansion	-0.006(0.004)	.126	-0.006(0.004)	.159	-0.007(0.004)	.049	-0.007(0.004)	.056
Time ² x Actor within person self-expansion	0.007(0.004)	.097	0.007(0.004)	.122	—	—	—	—
Time ² x Partner within person self-expansion	0.003(0.004)	.510	0.002(0.004)	.578	—	—	—	—

Table S19

Actor between and within person self-concept self-expansion moderating the linear trajectory of sexual desire (measured by the Female Sexual Function Index) over time

Parameter	Self-concept self-expansion		Self-concept self-expansion controlling for relationship satisfaction		Baseline self-concept self-expansion		Baseline self-concept self-expansion controlling for relationship satisfaction	
	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>
Intercept	3.88(0.04)	<.001	3.87(0.04)	<.001	3.90(0.04)	<.001	3.88(0.04)	<.001
Time	-0.02(0.003)	<.001	-0.02(0.003)	<.001	-0.03(0.003)	<.001	-0.03(0.003)	<.001
Between person self-expansion	0.25(0.04)	<.001	0.19(0.04)	<.001	0.18(0.04)	<.001	0.13(0.04)	<.001
Within person self-expansion	0.10(0.03)	<.001	0.07(0.03)	.017	————	————	————	————
Time x Between person self-expansion	-0.002(0.003)	.531	-0.002(0.003)	.408	-0.003(0.002)	.219	-0.003(0.002)	.235
Time x Within person self-expansion	0.00(0.003)	.918	0.001(0.003)	.734	————	————	————	————

Table S20

Actor between and within person self-concept self-expansion moderating the linear and curvilinear trajectory of sexual desire (measured by the Female Sexual Function Index) over time

Parameter	Self-concept self-expansion		Self-concept self-expansion controlling for relationship satisfaction		Baseline self-concept self-expansion		Baseline self-concept self-expansion controlling for relationship satisfaction	
	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>
Intercept	3.92(0.05)	<.001	3.91(0.05)	<.001	3.95(0.05)	<.001	3.92(0.05)	<.001
Time	-0.04(0.008)	<.001	-0.04(0.008)	<.001	-0.05(0.008)	<.001	-0.04(0.008)	<.001
Time ²	0.001(0.00)	.008	0.001(0.00)	.018	0.001(0.00)	.003	0.001(0.00)	.017
Between person self-expansion	0.26(0.04)	<.001	0.21(0.04)	<.001	0.19(0.04)	<.001	0.14(0.04)	<.001
Within person self-expansion	0.10(0.04)	.008	0.07(0.04)	.059	—	—	—	—
Time x Between person self-expansion	-0.007(0.008)	.335	-0.01(0.008)	.161	-0.008(0.007)	.249	-0.007(0.007)	.295
Time ² x Between person self-expansion	0.00(0.00)	.422	0.001(0.00)	.230	0.00(0.00)	.437	0.00(0.00)	.498
Time x Within person self-expansion	-0.004(0.01)	.652	-0.003(0.01)	.728	—	—	—	—
Time ² x Within person self-expansion	0.00(0.001)	.508	0.00(0.001)	.557	—	—	—	—

Table S21

Actor and partner between and within person self-concept self-expansion moderating the linear trajectory of sexual desire (measured by the Female Sexual Function Index) over time

Parameter	Self-concept self-expansion		Self-concept self-expansion controlling for relationship satisfaction		Baseline self-concept self-expansion		Baseline self-concept self-expansion controlling for relationship satisfaction	
	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>
Intercept	3.87(0.04)	<.001	3.87(0.04)	<.001	3.90(0.04)	<.001	3.88(0.04)	<.001
Time	-0.02(0.003)	<.001	-0.02(0.003)	<.001	-0.03(0.003)	<.001	-0.03(0.003)	<.001
Actor between person self-expansion	0.24(0.04)	<.001	0.20(0.04)	<.001	0.17(0.04)	<.001	0.12(0.04)	.001
Partner between person self-expansion	0.02(0.04)	.572	0.01(0.04)	.722	0.07(0.04)	.084	0.05(0.04)	.169
Actor within person self-expansion	0.08(0.03)	.003	0.06(0.03)	.052	—	—	—	—
Partner within person self-expansion	0.04(0.03)	.122	0.04(0.03)	.148	—	—	—	—
Time x actor between person self-expansion	-0.001(0.003)	.614	-0.002(0.003)	.482	-0.003(0.002)	.244	-0.003(0.002)	.257
Time x partner between person self-expansion	0.0008(0.003)	.977	0.0002(0.003)	.996	-0.001(0.002)	.630	-0.001(0.002)	.572

Parameter	Self-concept self-expansion		Self-concept self-expansion controlling for relationship satisfaction		Baseline self-concept self-expansion		Baseline self-concept self-expansion controlling for relationship satisfaction	
	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>
Time x actor within person self-expansion	0.001(0.003)	.687	0.002(0.003)	.575	————	————	————	————
Time x partner within person self-expansion	-0.003(0.003)	.325	-0.003(0.003)	.315	————	————	————	————

Table S22

Actor and partner between and within person self-concept self-expansion moderating the linear and curvilinear trajectory of sexual desire (measured by the Female Sexual Function Index) over time

Parameter	Self-concept self-expansion		Self-concept self-expansion controlling for relationship satisfaction		Baseline self-concept self-expansion		Baseline self-concept self-expansion controlling for relationship satisfaction	
	<i>b</i> (<i>se</i>)	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i> (<i>se</i>)	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i> (<i>se</i>)	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i> (<i>se</i>)	<i>p</i>
Intercept	3.90(0.05)	<.001	3.89(0.05)	<.001	3.95(0.05)	<.001	3.92(0.05)	<.001
Time	-0.04(0.009)	<.001	-0.04(0.009)	<.001	-0.05(0.008)	<.001	-0.04(0.008)	<.001
Time ²	0.001(0.00)	.031	0.001(0.00)	.052	0.001(0.00)	.003	0.001(0.00)	.017
Actor between person self-expansion	0.27(0.05)	<.001	0.23(0.05)	<.001	0.18(0.04)	<.001	0.14(0.04)	<.001
Partner between person self-expansion	0.006(0.04)	.898	0.0005(0.04)	.999	0.05(0.04)	.231	0.04(0.04)	.343
Actor within person self-expansion	0.10(0.04)	.009	0.07(0.04)	.060	—	—	—	—
Partner within person self-expansion	0.07(0.04)	.065	0.07(0.04)	.072	—	—	—	—
Time x Actor between person self-expansion	-0.01(0.009)	.093	-0.02(0.009)	.055	-0.009(0.007)	.187	-0.008(0.007)	.236
Time x Partner between person self-expansion	0.01(0.008)	.212	0.009(0.008)	.273	0.006(0.007)	.369	0.005(0.007)	.490
Time x Actor within person self-expansion	-0.008(0.01)	.429	-0.007(0.01)	.509	—	—	—	—

Parameter	Self-concept self-expansion		Self-concept self-expansion controlling for relationship satisfaction		Baseline self-concept self-expansion		Baseline self-concept self-expansion controlling for relationship satisfaction	
	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>
Time x Partner within person self-expansion	-0.02(0.01)	.064	-0.02(0.01)	.068	—	—	—	—
Time ² x Actor between person self-expansion	0.001(0.00)	.117	0.001(0.00)	.078	0.00(0.00)	.324	0.00(0.00)	.394
Time ² x Partner between person self-expansion	-0.001(0.00)	.178	-0.001(0.00)	.232	0.00(0.00)	.263	0.00(0.00)	.352
Time ² x Actor within person self-expansion	0.001(0.001)	.283	0.001(0.001)	.337	—	—	—	—
Time ² x Partner within person self-expansion	0.001(0.001)	.070	0.001(0.001)	.078	—	—	—	—

Table S23

Actor between and within person self-concept self-expansion moderating the linear trajectory of sexual desire (measured by the Sexual Desire Inventory) over time

Parameter	Self-concept self-expansion		Self-concept self-expansion controlling for relationship satisfaction		Baseline self-concept self-expansion		Baseline self-concept self-expansion controlling for relationship satisfaction	
	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>
Intercept	36.12(0.45)	<.001	36.06(0.45)	<.001	36.40(0.44)	<.001	36.22(0.43)	<.001
Time	-0.21(0.03)	<.001	-0.20(0.03)	<.001	-0.25(0.03)	<.001	-0.23(0.03)	<.001
Between person self-expansion	2.33(0.37)	<.001	1.76(0.37)	<.001	2.04(0.33)	<.001	1.56(0.32)	<.001
Within person self-expansion	1.06(0.23)	<.001	0.72(0.23)	.002	————	————	————	————
Time x Between person self-expansion	0.00(0.02)	.984	-0.008(0.02)	.734	-0.03(0.02)	.145	-0.03(0.02)	.144
Time x Within person self-expansion	0.008(0.02)	.712	0.02(0.02)	.476	————	————	————	————

Table S24

Actor between and within person self-concept self-expansion moderating the linear and curvilinear trajectory of sexual desire (measured by the Sexual Desire Inventory) over time

Parameter	Self-concept self-expansion		Self-concept self-expansion controlling for relationship satisfaction		Baseline self-concept self-expansion		Baseline self-concept self-expansion controlling for relationship satisfaction	
	<i>b</i> (<i>se</i>)	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i> (<i>se</i>)	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i> (<i>se</i>)	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i> (<i>se</i>)	<i>p</i>
Intercept	36.36(0.48)	<.001	36.25(0.47)	<.001	36.71(0.46)	<.001	36.43(0.45)	<.001
Time	-0.33(0.07)	<.001	-0.29(0.07)	<.001	-0.39(0.07)	<.001	-0.32(0.07)	<.001
Time ²	0.007(0.004)	.052	0.006(0.004)	.122	0.008(0.004)	.027	0.005(0.004)	.130
Between person self-expansion	2.29(0.40)	<.001	1.80(0.40)	<.001	2.12(0.35)	<.001	1.62(0.34)	<.001
Within person self-expansion	1.13(0.30)	<.001	0.81(0.30)	.008	—	—	—	—
Time x Between person self-expansion	0.02(0.06)	.738	-0.02(0.06)	.774	-0.07(0.06)	.246	-0.06(0.06)	.300
Time ² x Between person self-expansion	-0.001(0.003)	.696	0.001(0.003)	.875	0.002(0.003)	.496	0.002(0.003)	.587
Time x Within person self-expansion	-0.06(0.08)	.492	-0.04(0.08)	.590	—	—	—	—
Time ² x Within person self-expansion	0.004(0.004)	.323	0.004(0.004)	.379	—	—	—	—

Table S25

Actor and partner between and within person self-concept self-expansion moderating the linear trajectory of sexual desire (measured by the Sexual Desire Inventory) over time

Parameter	Self-concept self-expansion		Self-concept self-expansion controlling for relationship satisfaction		Baseline self-concept self-expansion		Baseline self-concept self-expansion controlling for relationship satisfaction	
	<i>b</i> (<i>se</i>)	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i> (<i>se</i>)	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i> (<i>se</i>)	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i> (<i>se</i>)	<i>p</i>
Intercept	36.11(0.46)	<.001	36.05(0.45)	<.001	36.38(0.43)	<.001	36.21(0.43)	<.001
Linear time	-0.20(0.03)	<.001	-0.19(0.03)	<.001	-0.25(0.03)	<.001	-0.23(0.03)	<.001
Between person self-expansion	2.29(0.38)	<.001	1.79(0.38)	<.001	2.12(0.33)	<.001	1.63(0.33)	<.001
Partner between person self-expansion	0.07(0.37)	.850	-0.03(0.36)	.945	0.74(0.33)	.025	0.56(0.32)	.082
Within person self-expansion	0.97(0.23)	<.001	0.68(0.23)	.004	—	—	—	—
Partner within person self-expansion	0.36(0.23)	.118	0.33(0.23)	.150	—	—	—	—
Linear time x Between person self-expansion	0.02(0.02)	.499	0.008(0.02)	.723	-0.03(0.02)	.126	-0.03(0.02)	.129
Linear time x Partner between person self-expansion	-0.02(0.02)	.489	-0.02(0.02)	.478	-0.009(0.02)	.677	-0.008(0.02)	.693
Linear time x Within person self-expansion	0.02(0.02)	.453	0.02(0.02)	.331	—	—	—	—
Linear time x Partner within person self-expansion	0.003(0.02)	.889	0.003(0.02)	.889	—	—	—	—

Table S26

Actor and partner between and within person self-concept self-expansion moderating the linear and curvilinear trajectory of sexual desire (measured by the Sexual Desire Inventory) over time

Parameter	Self-concept self-expansion		Self-concept self-expansion controlling for relationship satisfaction		Baseline self-concept self-expansion		Baseline self-concept self-expansion controlling for relationship satisfaction	
	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>
Intercept	36.27(0.49)	<.001	36.16(0.48)	<.001	36.70(0.46)	<.001	36.42(0.45)	<.001
Time	-0.28(0.07)	<.001	-0.25(0.07)	<.001	-0.39(0.07)	<.001	-0.32(0.07)	<.001
Time ²	0.006(0.004)	.153	0.004(0.004)	.257	0.008(0.004)	.027	0.005(0.004)	.127
Actor between person self-expansion	2.43(0.40)	<.001	1.98(0.40)	<.001	2.23(0.35)	<.001	1.73(0.34)	<.001
Partner between person self-expansion	-0.14(0.39)	.720	-0.21(0.39)	.594	0.52(0.35)	.140	0.40(0.34)	.249
Actor within person self-expansion	1.19(0.30)	<.001	0.90(0.30)	.003	—	—	—	—
Partner within person self-expansion	0.31(0.30)	.311	0.29(0.30)	.342	—	—	—	—
Time x Actor between person self-expansion	-0.04(0.07)	.519	-0.07(0.07)	.303	-0.08(0.06)	.148	-0.07(0.06)	.199
Time x Partner between person self-expansion	0.09(0.07)	.207	0.07(0.07)	.279	0.09(0.06)	.116	0.07(0.06)	.225
Time x Actor within person self-expansion	-0.09(0.08)	.260	-0.08(0.08)	.333	—	—	—	—

Parameter	Self-concept self-expansion		Self-concept self-expansion controlling for relationship satisfaction		Baseline self-concept self-expansion		Baseline self-concept self-expansion controlling for relationship satisfaction	
	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>
Time x Partner within person self-expansion	-0.01(0.08)	.876	-0.007(0.08)	.928	———	———	———	———
Time ² x Actor between person self-expansion	0.003(0.004)	.370	0.004(0.004)	.232	0.003(0.003)	.335	0.002(0.003)	.429
Time ² x Partner between person self-expansion	-0.006(0.004)	.105	-0.005(0.004)	.152	-0.006(0.003)	.066	-0.004(0.003)	.147
Time ² x Actor within person self-expansion	0.007(0.004)	.134	0.006(0.004)	.173	———	———	———	———
Time ² x Partner within person self-expansion	0.002(0.004)	.726	0.001(0.004)	.804	———	———	———	———

Table S27

Gender differences in actor between and within person self-expansion moderating the linear and curvilinear trajectory of sexual desire (measured by the Female Sexual Function Index) over time

Parameter	Gender		Man		Woman	
	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>
Intercept	3.89 (0.05)	<.001	4.05 (0.07)	<.001	3.74 (0.07)	<.001
Time	-0.03 (0.01)	<.001	-0.02 (0.01)	.224	-0.04 (0.01)	<.001
Time ²	0.001 (0.00)	.209	0.00 (0.001)	.735	0.001 (0.001)	.023
Actor between person self-expansion	0.27 (0.05)	<.001	0.25 (0.08)	.001	0.30 (0.07)	<.001
Partner between person self-expansion	0.004 (0.05)	.929	-0.04 (0.07)	.528	0.05 (0.07)	.442
Actor within person self-expansion	0.11 (0.04)	.007	0.10 (0.06)	.100	0.13 (0.06)	.029
Partner within person self-expansion	0.07 (0.04)	.083	0.01 (0.06)	.843	0.13 (0.06)	.019
Gender	0.15 (0.05)	.001	-0.31 (0.09)	.001	0.31 (0.09)	.001
Gender x Time	0.02 (0.01)	.099	-0.03 (0.02)	.099	0.03 (0.02)	.099
Gender x Time ²	-0.00 (0.00)	.071	0.00 (0.00)	.071	-0.00 (0.00)	.071
Gender x Actor between person self-expansion	-0.03 (0.05)	.626	0.05 (0.10)	.626	-0.05 (0.10)	.626
Gender x Partner between person self-expansion	-0.05 (0.05)	.329	0.10 (0.10)	.329	-0.10 (0.10)	.329
Gender x Actor within person self-expansion	-0.01 (0.04)	.763	0.03 (0.09)	.763	-0.03 (0.09)	.763
Gender x Partner within person self-expansion	-0.06 (0.04)	.157	0.12 (0.09)	.157	-0.12 (0.09)	.157

Parameter	Gender		Man		Woman	
	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>
Time x Actor between person self-expansion	-0.02 (0.01)	.060	-0.02 (0.01)	.189	-0.02 (0.01)	.179
Time x Partner between person self-expansion	0.01 (0.01)	.135	0.01 (0.01)	.263	0.01 (0.01)	.326
Time x Actor within person self-expansion	-0.02 (0.01)	.147	-0.02 (0.02)	.206	-0.01 (0.01)	.461
Time x Partner within person self-expansion	-0.01 (0.01)	.296	0.01 (0.02)	.369	-0.04 (0.01)	.014
Time ² x Actor between person self-expansion	0.001 (0.001)	.066	0.001 (0.001)	.296	0.001 (0.001)	.111
Time ² x Partner between person self-expansion	-0.001 (0.001)	.164	-0.001 (0.001)	.394	-0.001 (0.001)	.268
Time ² x Actor within person self-expansion	0.001 (0.001)	.103	0.001 (0.001)	.134	0.001 (0.001)	.722
Time ² x Partner within person self-expansion	0.00 (0.001)	.476	-0.001 (0.001)	.226	0.002 (0.001)	.023
Gender x Time x Actor between person self-expansion	-0.001 (0.01)	.904	0.002 (0.02)	.904	-0.002 (0.02)	.904
Gender x Time x Partner between person self-expansion	0.001 (0.01)	.909	-0.002 (0.02)	.909	0.002 (0.02)	.909
Gender x Time x Actor within person self-expansion	-0.01 (0.01)	.646	0.01 (0.02)	.646	-0.01 (0.02)	.646
Gender x Time x Partner within person self-expansion	0.03 (0.01)	.020	-0.05 (0.02)	.020	0.05 (0.02)	.020
Gender x Time ² x Actor between person self-expansion	0.00 (0.001)	.814	0.00 (0.001)	.814	0.00 (0.001)	.814
Gender x Time ² x Partner between person self-expansion	0.0001 (0.001)	.870	0.00 (0.001)	.870	0.00 (0.001)	.870
Gender x Time ² x Actor within person self-expansion	0.00 (0.001)	.496	-0.001 (0.001)	.496	0.001 (0.001)	.496
Gender x Time ² x Partner within person self-expansion	-0.002 (0.001)	.015	0.003 (0.001)	.015	-0.003 (0.001)	.015

Table S8

Gender differences in actor between person self-expansion at baseline moderating the linear and curvilinear trajectory of sexual desire (measured by the Female Sexual Function Index) over time

Parameter	Gender		Gender controlling for relationship satisfaction	
	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>
Intercept	3.96 (0.05)	<.001	3.94 (0.05)	<.001
Time	-0.04 (0.01)	<.001	-0.04 (0.01)	<.001
Time ²	0.001 (0.000)	.014	0.001 (0.000)	.051
Actor between person self-expansion	0.20 (0.05)	<.001	0.15 (0.05)	.001
Partner between person self-expansion	0.04 (0.05)	.380	0.03 (0.05)	.556
Relationship satisfaction	—	—	0.14 (0.02)	<.001
Gender	0.15 (0.04)	<.001	0.15 (0.04)	<.001
Gender x Time	0.02 (0.01)	.044	0.01 (0.01)	.080
Gender x Time ²	-0.00 (0.000)	.070	-0.00 (0.000)	.117
Gender x Actor between person self-expansion	-0.05 (0.05)	.278	-0.05 (0.05)	.280

Parameter	Gender		Gender controlling for relationship satisfaction	
	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>
Gender x Partner between person self-expansion	-0.04 (0.05)	.400	-0.03 (0.05)	.488
Time x Actor between person self-expansion	-0.01 (0.01)	.110	-0.01 (0.01)	.164
Time x Partner between person self-expansion	0.01 (0.01)	.296	0.01 (0.01)	.383
Time ² x Actor between person self-expansion	0.001 (0.000)	.173	0.001 (0.000)	.251
Time ² x Partner between person self-expansion	0.000 (0.000)	.258	0.000 (0.000)	.343
Gender x Time x Actor between person self-expansion	0.00 (0.01)	.989	0.00 (0.01)	.781
Gender x Time x Partner between person self-expansion	0.00 (0.01)	.751	0.00 (0.01)	.879
Gender x Time ² x Actor between person self-expansion	0.00002 (0.000)	.973	0.000 (0.000)	.786
Gender x Time ² x Partner between person self-expansion	0.00002 (0.000)	.963	0.00006 (0.000)	.886

Table S28

Gender differences in actor between and within person self-expansion moderating the linear and curvilinear trajectory of sexual desire (measured by the Female Sexual Function Index) over time controlling for relationship satisfaction

Parameter	Gender		Man		Woman	
	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>
Intercept	3.89 (0.05)	<.001	4.04 (0.07)	<.001	3.73 (0.07)	<.001
Time	-0.03 (0.01)	.001	-0.02 (0.01)	.219	-0.04 (0.01)	<.001
Time ²	0.001 (0.00)	.256	0.000 (0.001)	.772	0.001 (0.001)	.041
Actor between person self-expansion	0.23 (0.05)	<.001	0.20 (0.08)	.011	0.26 (0.07)	<.001
Partner between person self-expansion	-0.004 (0.05)	.939	-0.05 (0.07)	.505	0.04 (0.07)	.568
Actor within person self-expansion	0.08 (0.04)	.057	0.06 (0.06)	.317	0.10 (0.06)	.087
Partner within person self-expansion	0.07 (0.04)	.085	0.02 (0.06)	.769	0.13 (0.06)	.027
Relationship satisfaction	0.11 (0.02)	<.001	0.11 (0.02)	<.001	0.11 (0.02)	<.001
Gender	0.16 (0.05)	.001	-0.31 (0.09)	.001	0.31 (0.09)	.001
Gender x Time	0.01 (0.01)	.140	-0.03 (0.02)	.140	0.03 (0.02)	.140
Gender x Time ²	-0.001 (0.00)	.108	0.002 (0.001)	.108	-0.002 (0.001)	.108

Parameter	Gender		Man		Woman	
	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>
Gender x Actor between person self-expansion	-0.03 (0.05)	.532	0.06 (0.10)	.532	-0.06 (0.10)	.532
Gender x Partner between person self-expansion	-0.04 (0.05)	.387	0.09 (0.10)	.387	-0.09 (0.10)	.387
Gender x Actor within person self-expansion	-0.02 (0.04)	.654	0.04 (0.09)	.654	-0.04 (0.09)	.654
Gender x Partner within person self-expansion	-0.05 (0.04)	.207	0.11 (0.09)	.207	-0.11 (0.09)	.207
Time x Actor between person self-expansion	-0.02 (0.01)	.045	-0.02 (0.01)	.196	-0.02 (0.01)	.118
Time x Partner between person self-expansion	0.01 (0.01)	.185	0.01 (0.01)	.328	0.01 (0.01)	.376
Time x Actor within person self-expansion	-0.01 (0.01)	.206	-0.02 (0.02)	.278	-0.01 (0.02)	.506
Time x Partner within person self-expansion	-0.01 (0.01)	.283	0.01 (0.02)	.406	-0.04 (0.02)	.015
Time ² x Actor between person self-expansion	0.001 (0.001)	.057	0.001 (0.001)	.351	0.001 (0.001)	.068
Time ² x Partner between person self-expansion	-0.001 (0.001)	.230	0.000 (0.001)	.511	-0.001 (0.001)	.299
Time ² x Actor within person self-expansion	0.001 (0.001)	.137	0.001 (0.001)	.163	0.000 (0.001)	.529
Time ² x Partner within person self-expansion	0.00 (0.001)	.479	-0.001 (0.001)	.232	0.002 (0.001)	.025
Gender x Time x Actor between person self-expansion	0.00 (0.01)	.969	-0.001 (0.02)	.969	0.001 (0.02)	.969

Parameter	Gender		Man		Woman	
	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>
Gender x Time x Partner between person self-expansion	0.001 (0.01)	.936	-0.001 (0.02)	.936	0.001 (0.02)	.936
Gender x Time x Actor within person self-expansion	-0.004 (0.01)	.710	0.008 (0.02)	.710	-0.008 (0.02)	.710
Gender x Time x Partner within person self-expansion	0.03 (0.01)	.024	-0.05 (0.02)	.024	0.05 (0.02)	.024
Gender x Time ² x Actor between person self-expansion	0.00 (0.001)	.637	0.000 (0.001)	.637	0.000 (0.001)	.637
Gender x Time ² x Partner between person self-expansion	0.00 (0.001)	.800	0.000 (0.001)	.800	0.000 (0.001)	.800
Gender x Time ² x Actor within person self-expansion	0.00 (0.001)	.509	-0.001 (0.001)	.509	0.001 (0.001)	.509
Gender x Time ² x Partner within person self-expansion	-0.001 (0.001)	.016	0.003 (0.001)	.016	-0.003 (0.001)	.016

Table S29

Gender differences in actor between and within person exciting self-expansion moderating the linear and curvilinear trajectory of sexual desire (measured by the Female Sexual Function Index) over time

Parameter	Gender		Man		Woman	
	<i>b</i> (<i>se</i>)	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i> (<i>se</i>)	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i> (<i>se</i>)	<i>p</i>
Intercept	3.87 (0.05)	<.001	4.04 (0.07)	<.001	3.71 (0.07)	<.001
Time	-0.03 (0.01)	.004	-0.02 (0.01)	.270	-0.04 (0.01)	.001
Time ²	0.000 (0.000)	.390	0.000 (0.001)	.649	0.001 (0.001)	.071
Actor between person self-expansion	0.26 (0.05)	<.001	0.25 (0.08)	.001	0.27 (0.06)	<.001
Partner between person self-expansion	0.02 (0.05)	.644	-0.04 (0.07)	.562	0.09 (0.07)	.212
Actor within person self-expansion	0.11 (0.04)	.005	0.11 (0.06)	.072	0.12 (0.05)	.032
Partner within person self-expansion	0.08 (0.04)	.041	0.01 (0.06)	.910	0.15 (0.05)	.004
Gender	0.17 (0.05)	<.001	-0.33 (0.10)	<.001	0.33 (0.10)	<.001
Gender x Time	0.01 (0.01)	.180	-0.02 (0.02)	.180	0.02 (0.02)	.180
Gender x Time ²	-0.001 (0.000)	.117	0.002 (0.001)	.117	-0.002 (0.001)	.117
Gender x Actor between person self-expansion	-0.01 (0.05)	.826	0.02 (0.10)	.826	-0.02 (0.10)	.826

Parameter	Gender		Man		Woman	
	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>
Gender x Partner between person self-expansion	-0.06 (0.05)	.203	0.13 (0.10)	.203	-0.13 (0.10)	.203
Gender x Actor within person self-expansion	-0.01 (0.04)	.899	0.01 (0.08)	.899	-0.01 (0.08)	.899
Gender x Partner within person self-expansion	-0.07 (0.04)	.064	0.15 (0.08)	.064	-0.15 (0.08)	.064
Time x Actor between person self-expansion	-0.01 (0.01)	.135	-0.02 (0.01)	.284	-0.01 (0.01)	.300
Time x Partner between person self-expansion	0.01 (0.01)	.182	0.01 (0.01)	.359	0.01 (0.01)	.337
Time x Actor within person self-expansion	-0.02 (0.01)	.061	-0.03 (0.02)	.057	-0.01 (0.01)	.519
Time x Partner within person self-expansion	-0.01 (0.01)	.240	0.02 (0.02)	.178	-0.04 (0.01)	.002
Time ² x Actor between person self-expansion	0.001 (0.001)	.104	0.001 (0.001)	.388	0.001 (0.001)	.137
Time ² x Partner between person self-expansion	-0.001 (0.001)	.215	0.000 (0.001)	.503	-0.001 (0.001)	.282
Time ² x Actor within person self-expansion	0.001 (0.001)	.054	0.002 (0.001)	.030	0.000 (0.001)	.698
Time ² x Partner within person self-expansion	0.000 (0.001)	.421	-0.001 (0.001)	.076	0.002 (0.001)	.003
Gender x Time x Actor between person self-expansion	0.00 (0.01)	.885	0.00 (0.02)	.885	0.00 (0.02)	.885
Gender x Time x Partner between person self-expansion	0.00 (0.01)	.986	0.00 (0.02)	.986	0.00 (0.02)	.986

Parameter	Gender		Man		Woman	
	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>
Gender x Time x Actor within person self-expansion	-0.01 (0.01)	.312	0.02 (0.02)	.312	-0.02 (0.02)	.312
Gender x Time x Partner within person self-expansion	0.03 (0.01)	.002	-0.06 (0.02)	.002	0.06 (0.02)	.002
Gender x Time ² x Actor between person self-expansion	0.000 (0.001)	.767	0.000 (0.001)	.767	0.000 (0.001)	.767
Gender x Time ² x Partner between person self-expansion	0.000 (0.001)	.779	0.000 (0.001)	.779	0.000 (0.001)	.779
Gender x Time ² x Actor within person self-expansion	0.001 (0.001)	.159	-0.002 (0.001)	.159	0.002 (0.001)	.159
Gender x Time ² x Partner within person self-expansion	-0.002 (0.001)	<.001	0.004 (0.001)	<.001	-0.004 (0.001)	<.001

Table S30

Gender differences in actor between and within person exciting self-expansion moderating the linear and curvilinear trajectory of sexual desire (measured by the Female Sexual Function Index) over time controlling for relationship satisfaction

Parameter	Gender		Man		Woman	
	<i>b</i> (<i>se</i>)	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i> (<i>se</i>)	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i> (<i>se</i>)	<i>p</i>
Intercept	3.87 (0.05)	<.001	4.04 (0.07)	<.001	3.70 (0.07)	<.001
Time	-0.03 (0.01)	.005	-0.02 (0.01)	.237	-0.04 (0.01)	.003
Time ²	0.000 (0.000)	.415	0.000 (0.001)	.722	0.001 (0.001)	.104
Actor between person self-expansion	0.21 (0.05)	<.001	0.19 (0.08)	.012	0.23 (0.06)	<.001
Partner between person self-expansion	0.01 (0.05)	.822	-0.05 (0.07)	.500	0.07 (0.07)	.313
Actor within person self-expansion	0.08 (0.04)	.046	0.07 (0.06)	.219	0.09 (0.05)	.106
Partner within person self-expansion	0.07 (0.04)	.055	0.00 (0.06)	.961	0.15 (0.05)	.006
Relationship satisfaction	0.11 (0.02)	<.001	0.11 (0.02)	<.001	0.11 (0.02)	<.001
Gender	0.17 (0.05)	<.001	-0.34 (0.10)	<.001	0.34 (0.10)	<.001
Gender x Time	0.01 (0.01)	.244	-0.02 (0.02)	.244	0.02 (0.02)	.244
Gender x Time ²	-0.00 (0.00)	.171	0.001 (0.001)	.171	-0.001 (0.001)	.171

Parameter	Gender		Man		Woman	
	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>
Gender x Actor between person self-expansion	-0.02 (0.05)	.700	0.04 (0.10)	.700	-0.04 (0.10)	.700
Gender x Partner between person self-expansion	-0.06 (0.05)	.240	0.12 (0.10)	.240	-0.12 (0.10)	.240
Gender x Actor within person self-expansion	-0.01 (0.04)	.848	0.02 (0.08)	.848	-0.02 (0.08)	.848
Gender x Partner within person self-expansion	-0.07 (0.04)	.068	0.14 (0.08)	.068	-0.14 (0.08)	.068
Time x Actor between person self-expansion	-0.02 (0.01)	.102	-0.02 (0.01)	.290	-0.02 (0.01)	.205
Time x Partner between person self-expansion	0.01 (0.01)	.219	0.01 (0.01)	.379	0.01 (0.01)	.395
Time x Actor within person self-expansion	-0.02 (0.01)	.089	-0.03 (0.02)	.077	-0.01 (0.01)	.591
Time x Partner within person self-expansion	-0.01 (0.01)	.260	0.02 (0.02)	.166	-0.04 (0.01)	.002
Time ² x Actor between person self-expansion	0.001 (0.001)	.087	0.001 (0.001)	.428	0.001 (0.001)	.089
Time ² x Partner between person self-expansion	-0.001 (0.001)	.272	0.000 (0.001)	.557	-0.001 (0.001)	.336
Time ² x Actor within person self-expansion	0.001 (0.001)	.070	0.002 (0.001)	.036	0.000 (0.001)	.767
Time ² x Partner within person self-expansion	0.000 (0.001)	.455	-0.001 (0.001)	.069	0.002 (0.001)	.003
Gender x Time x Actor between person self-expansion	0.00 (0.01)	.988	0.00 (0.02)	.988	0.00 (0.02)	.988

Parameter	Gender		Man		Woman	
	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>
Gender x Time x Partner between person self-expansion	0.00 (0.01)	.974	0.00 (0.02)	.974	0.00 (0.02)	.974
Gender x Time x Actor within person self-expansion	-0.01 (0.01)	.327	0.02 (0.02)	.327	-0.02 (0.02)	.327
Gender x Time x Partner within person self-expansion	0.03 (0.01)	.002	-0.06 (0.02)	.002	0.06 (0.02)	.002
Gender x Time ² x Actor between person self-expansion	0.000 (0.001)	.626	0.001 (0.001)	.626	-0.001 (0.001)	.626
Gender x Time ² x Partner between person self-expansion	0.000 (0.001)	.795	0.000 (0.001)	.795	0.000 (0.001)	.795
Gender x Time ² x Actor within person self-expansion	0.001 (0.001)	.158	-0.002 (0.001)	.158	0.002 (0.001)	.158
Gender x Time ² x Partner within person self-expansion	-0.002 (0.001)	<.001	0.004 (0.001)	<.001	-0.004 (0.001)	<.001

Table S31

Gender differences in actor between and within person self-concept self-expansion moderating the linear and curvilinear trajectory of sexual desire (measured by the Female Sexual Function Index) over time

Parameter	Gender		Gender x controlling for relationship satisfaction	
	<i>b</i> (<i>se</i>)	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i> (<i>se</i>)	<i>p</i>
Intercept	3.92 (0.05)	<.001	3.91 (0.05)	<.001
Time	-0.04 (0.01)	<.001	-0.03 (0.01)	<.001
Time ²	0.001 (0.000)	.100	0.001 (0.000)	.144
Actor between person self-expansion	0.25 (0.05)	<.001	0.20 (0.05)	<.001
Partner between person self-expansion	0.01 (0.05)	.846	0.00 (0.05)	.962
Actor within person self-expansion	0.09 (0.04)	.014	0.07 (0.04)	.089
Partner within person self-expansion	0.05 (0.04)	.162	0.05 (0.04)	.177
Gender	—	—	0.11 (0.02)	<.001
Gender x Time	0.15 (0.05)	.002	0.15 (0.05)	.001
Gender x Time ²	0.02 (0.01)	.062	0.01 (0.01)	.095

Parameter	Gender		Gender x controlling for relationship satisfaction	
	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>
Gender x Actor between person self-expansion	-0.001 (0.000)	.049	-0.001 (0.000)	.079
Gender x Partner between person self-expansion	-0.03 (0.05)	.490	-0.04 (0.05)	.412
Gender x Actor within person self-expansion	-0.03 (0.05)	.462	-0.03 (0.05)	.546
Gender x Partner within person self-expansion	-0.03 (0.04)	.496	-0.03 (0.04)	.399
Time x Actor between person self-expansion	-0.04 (0.04)	.359	-0.03 (0.04)	.472
Time x Partner between person self-expansion	-0.02 (0.01)	.058	-0.02 (0.01)	.038
Time x Actor within person self-expansion	0.01 (0.01)	.143	0.01 (0.01)	.206
Time x Partner within person self-expansion	-0.01 (0.01)	.283	-0.01 (0.01)	.358
Time ² x Actor between person self-expansion	-0.01 (0.01)	.375	-0.01 (0.01)	.393
Time ² x Partner between person self-expansion	0.001 (0.000)	.068	0.001 (0.000)	.054
Time ² x Actor within person self-expansion	-0.001 (0.000)	.166	-0.001 (0.000)	.237
Time ² x Partner within person self-expansion	0.001 (0.001)	.172	0.001 (0.001)	.214
Gender x Time x Actor between person self-expansion	0.000 (0.001)	.556	0.000 (0.001)	.605

Parameter	Gender		Gender x controlling for relationship satisfaction	
	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>
Gender x Time x Partner between person self-expansion	0.00 (0.01)	.980	0.00 (0.01)	.934
Gender x Time x Actor within person self-expansion	0.00 (0.01)	.975	0.00 (0.01)	.937
Gender x Time x Partner within person self-expansion	0.00 (0.01)	.913	0.00 (0.01)	.840
Gender x Time ² x Actor between person self-expansion	0.02 (0.01)	.093	0.02 (0.01)	.117
Gender x Time ² x Partner between person self-expansion	0.000 (0.000)	.766	0.000 (0.000)	.608
Gender x Time ² x Actor within person self-expansion	0.000 (0.000)	.766	0.000 (0.000)	.676
Gender x Time ² x Partner within person self-expansion	0.000 (0.001)	.980	0.000 (0.001)	.995

Table S32

Gender differences in actor between and within person self-expansion moderating the linear and curvilinear trajectory of sexual desire (measured by the Sexual Desire Inventory) over time

Parameter	Gender		Gender x controlling for relationship satisfaction	
	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>
Intercept	36.19 (0.47)	<.001	36.12 (0.47)	<.001
Time	-0.19 (0.08)	.011	-0.17 (0.07)	.019
Time ²	0.001 (0.004)	.725	0.001 (0.004)	.860
Actor between person self-expansion	2.62 (0.43)	<.001	2.13 (0.43)	<.001
Partner between person self-expansion	-0.11 (0.42)	.798	-0.20 (0.41)	.628
Actor within person self-expansion	1.65 (0.34)	<.001	1.29 (0.34)	<.001
Partner within person self-expansion	0.26 (0.34)	.446	0.25 (0.34)	.462
Relationship satisfaction	—	—	1.18 (0.20)	<.001
Gender	0.84 (0.39)	.030	0.87 (0.38)	.023
Gender x Time	0.14 (0.07)	.051	0.12 (0.07)	.084

Parameter	Gender		Gender x controlling for relationship satisfaction	
	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>
Gender x Time ²	-0.006 (0.004)	.136	-0.005 (0.004)	.220
Gender x Actor between person self-expansion	0.20 (0.45)	.655	0.13 (0.45)	.774
Gender x Partner between person self-expansion	-0.91 (0.44)	.042	-0.85 (0.44)	.054
Gender x Actor within person self-expansion	0.21 (0.35)	.545	0.14 (0.34)	.676
Gender x Partner within person self-expansion	-0.44 (0.35)	.206	-0.37 (0.34)	.284
Time x Actor between person self-expansion	-0.05 (0.07)	.481	-0.07 (0.07)	.350
Time x Partner between person self-expansion	0.11 (0.07)	.130	0.10 (0.07)	.184
Time x Actor within person self-expansion	-0.20 (0.09)	.026	-0.18 (0.09)	.045
Time x Partner within person self-expansion	0.01 (0.09)	.953	0.004 (0.09)	.962
Time ² x Actor between person self-expansion	0.003 (0.004)	.450	0.004 (0.004)	.372
Time ² x Partner between person self-expansion	-0.007 (0.004)	.086	-0.006 (0.004)	.134
Time ² x Actor within person self-expansion	0.01 (0.01)	.016	0.011 (0.005)	.026
Time ² x Partner within person self-expansion	0.001 (0.005)	.915	0.000 (0.005)	.937

Parameter	Gender		Gender x controlling for relationship satisfaction	
	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>
Gender x Time x Actor between person self-expansion	0.003 (0.08)	.973	0.02 (0.07)	.830
Gender x Time x Partner between person self-expansion	0.15 (0.08)	.052	0.14 (0.07)	.053
Gender x Time x Actor within person self-expansion	-0.09 (0.09)	.357	-0.08 (0.09)	.404
Gender x Time x Partner within person self-expansion	0.07 (0.09)	.426	0.07 (0.09)	.472
Gender x Time ² x Actor between person self-expansion	-0.001 (0.004)	.810	-0.002 (0.004)	.594
Gender x Time ² x Partner between person self-expansion	-0.008 (0.004)	.059	-0.007 (0.004)	.071
Gender x Time ² x Actor within person self-expansion	0.006 (0.005)	.274	0.005 (0.005)	.273
Gender x Time ² x Partner within person self-expansion	-0.006 (0.005)	.257	-0.006 (0.005)	.267

Table S33

Gender differences in actor between and within person exciting self-expansion moderating the linear and curvilinear trajectory of sexual desire (measured by the Sexual Desire Inventory) over time

Parameter	Gender		Gender x controlling for relationship satisfaction	
	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>
Intercept	35.96 (0.47)	<.001	35.95 (0.47)	<.001
Time	-0.14 (0.08)	.070	-0.13 (0.08)	.084
Time ²	-0.001 (0.004)	.766	-0.001 (0.004)	.715
Actor between person self-expansion	2.47 (0.42)	<.001	1.98 (0.43)	<.001
Partner between person self-expansion	0.25 (0.42)	.549	0.12 (0.41)	.770
Actor within person self-expansion	1.56 (0.32)	<.001	1.22 (0.32)	<.001
Partner within person self-expansion	0.48 (0.32)	.128	0.42 (0.31)	.179
Relationship satisfaction	—	—	1.20 (0.20)	<.001
Gender	0.86 (0.40)	.030	0.90 (0.39)	.022
Gender x Time	0.14 (0.07)	.060	0.12 (0.07)	.100

Parameter	Gender		Gender x controlling for relationship satisfaction	
	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>
Gender x Time ²	-0.005 (0.004)	.161	-0.004 (0.004)	.258
Gender x Actor between person self-expansion	0.17 (0.45)	.696	0.09 (0.44)	.843
Gender x Partner between person self-expansion	-0.89 (0.44)	.043	-0.84 (0.44)	.054
Gender x Actor within person self-expansion	0.21 (0.33)	.530	0.17 (0.32)	.588
Gender x Partner within person self-expansion	-0.25 (0.32)	.430	-0.24 (0.32)	.449
Time x Actor between person self-expansion	-0.02 (0.07)	.764	-0.04 (0.07)	.599
Time x Partner between person self-expansion	0.08 (0.07)	.268	0.07 (0.07)	.316
Time x Actor within person self-expansion	-0.18 (0.08)	.031	-0.16 (0.08)	.053
Time x Partner within person self-expansion	-0.06 (0.08)	.495	-0.05 (0.08)	.556
Time ² x Actor between person self-expansion	0.002 (0.004)	.610	0.003 (0.004)	.513
Time ² x Partner between person self-expansion	-0.006 (0.004)	.137	-0.005 (0.004)	.184
Time ² x Actor within person self-expansion	0.01 (0.01)	.042	0.009 (0.005)	.058
Time ² x Partner within person self-expansion	0.004 (0.005)	.425	0.003 (0.004)	.483

Parameter	Gender		Gender x controlling for relationship satisfaction	
	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>
Gender x Time x Actor between person self-expansion	-0.04 (0.08)	.625	-0.02 (0.08)	.759
Gender x Time x Partner between person self-expansion	0.14 (0.08)	.058	0.15 (0.07)	.045
Gender x Time x Actor within person self-expansion	-0.05 (0.09)	.554	-0.05 (0.09)	.570
Gender x Time x Partner within person self-expansion	0.02 (0.09)	.795	0.02 (0.08)	.792
Gender x Time ² x Actor between person self-expansion	0.001 (0.004)	.866	0.000 (0.004)	.946
Gender x Time ² x Partner between person self-expansion	-0.008 (0.004)	.059	-0.008 (0.004)	.051
Gender x Time ² x Actor within person self-expansion	0.004 (0.005)	.432	0.004 (0.005)	.419
Gender x Time ² x Partner within person self-expansion	-0.003 (0.005)	.530	-0.003 (0.005)	.522

Table S34

Gender differences in actor between and within person self-concept self-expansion moderating the linear and curvilinear trajectory of sexual desire (measured by the Sexual Desire Inventory) over time

Parameter	Gender		Gender x controlling for relationship satisfaction	
	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>
Intercept	36.40 (0.47)	<.001	36.29 (0.47)	<.001
Time	-0.23 (0.07)	.002	-0.21 (0.07)	.005
Time ²	0.003 (0.004)	.458	0.002 (0.004)	.634
Actor between person self-expansion	2.37 (0.41)	<.001	1.92 (0.41)	<.001
Partner between person self-expansion	-0.13 (0.40)	.733	-0.21 (0.39)	.583
Actor within person self-expansion	1.35 (0.31)	<.001	1.05 (0.31)	<.001
Partner within person self-expansion	0.19 (0.31)	.530	0.17 (0.31)	.575
Gender	—	—	1.23 (0.20)	<.001
Gender x Time	0.80 (0.38)	.037	0.83 (0.38)	.028
Gender x Time ²	0.15 (0.07)	.030	0.13 (0.07)	.053

Parameter	Gender		Gender x controlling for relationship satisfaction	
	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>
Gender x Actor between person self-expansion	-0.01 (0.00)	.096	-0.005 (0.004)	.168
Gender x Partner between person self-expansion	0.15 (0.43)	.718	0.09 (0.42)	.833
Gender x Actor within person self-expansion	-0.78 (0.42)	.063	-0.71 (0.41)	.084
Gender x Partner within person self-expansion	0.20 (0.31)	.526	0.13 (0.31)	.669
Time x Actor between person self-expansion	-0.38 (0.31)	.228	-0.30 (0.31)	.340
Time x Partner between person self-expansion	-0.04 (0.07)	.618	-0.06 (0.07)	.417
Time x Actor within person self-expansion	0.10 (0.07)	.145	0.09 (0.07)	.216
Time x Partner within person self-expansion	-0.15 (0.08)	.068	-0.14 (0.08)	.099
Time ² x Actor between person self-expansion	0.01 (0.08)	.880	0.02 (0.08)	.825
Time ² x Partner between person self-expansion	0.002 (0.004)	.546	0.003 (0.004)	.421
Time ² x Actor within person self-expansion	-0.01 (0.00)	.122	-0.005 (0.004)	.190
Time ² x Partner within person self-expansion	0.01 (0.01)	.030	0.01 (0.01)	.042
Gender x Time x Actor between person self-expansion	0.00009 (0.01)	.985	0.000 (0.01)	.925

Parameter	Gender		Gender x controlling for relationship satisfaction	
	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b(se)</i>	<i>p</i>
Gender x Time x Partner between person self-expansion	0.03 (0.07)	.702	0.04 (0.07)	.619
Gender x Time x Actor within person self-expansion	0.12 (0.07)	.081	0.12 (0.07)	.087
Gender x Time x Partner within person self-expansion	-0.09 (0.09)	.308	-0.08 (0.09)	.355
Gender x Time ² x Actor between person self-expansion	0.07 (0.09)	.428	0.06 (0.08)	.508
Gender x Time ² x Partner between person self-expansion	-0.002 (0.004)	.687	-0.003 (0.004)	.504
Gender x Time ² x Actor within person self-expansion	-0.007 (0.004)	.078	-0.006 (0.004)	.103
Gender x Time ² x Partner within person self-expansion	0.01 (0.01)	.276	0.005 (0.005)	.274

Supplemental Figures**Figure S1**

Trajectory of sexual desire (measured by the Sexual Desire Inventory) over time

