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**SECTION:** VIEWPOINTS, Pg. 6H

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**HEADLINE:** THE **EXPANDING UNIVERSE**

**BODY:**

The fate of the **universe** may be told by exploding stars.

Cosmology holds that the **universe has been expanding** ever since its creation in the Big Bang, but that the expansion might grind to a halt eventually, or even reverse itself into a "big crunch." New research on exploding stars, or supernovae, supports a third option -- that the universe will continue to expand forever.

The new results come from a research team studying the supernovae known as Type 1a. By examining how bright those explosions appear, astronomers can estimate how far away the supernovae lie. Then researchers can compare the brightness and distances of the supernovae and determine whether faraway supernovae are rushing away at the same rate that nearer supernovae do.

One of the teams, led by Saul Perlmutter of the University of California, Berkeley, reports that recent observations of a handful of supernovae suggest that the universe is less dense than many scientists had thought. Without enough matter, and hence gravity, to slow its expansion down, the universe will continue to grow, the scientists write in a paper available on the World Wide Web and appearing in this week's Nature.

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