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## Enhancing Others Through Information Selection: Establishing the Phenomenon and Its Preconditions

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### Abstract

Past research has uncovered that people prefer to deliver positive news and flattering feedback to others. However, less is known about the generalizability and motives underlying the general selection of information to enhance others' self-views. Over a series of seven experiments (six preregistered), participants (total  $N = 3,117$ ) informed others that a test the others had taken was either valid or invalid. Participants were more likely to choose information that the test was valid when the others performed well but invalid when the test takers performed poorly, thus selecting information that would enhance others' positive self-views. However, this selection pattern was present only for likable and neutral others, dissipating when the others were described as having reproachable traits (Experiments 1–3, 5a and 5b) and when participants had the goal of providing accurate information (Experiment 6). This selection bias, which was driven by an interest in pleasing others, was present across different tests (Experiments 3, 5a, and 5b), showed when the others did and did not have self-enhancing views, and when objective information about the test validity was provided (Experiments 4, 5a, and 5b).

### Keywords

other-enhancing; feedback; information selection; self-view; accuracy goal

People see themselves through rose-colored glasses. They consider themselves better than others across an array of dimensions (Alicke & Govorun, 2005; Dunning et al., 2004) and seek information that might help them enhance their self-views (Dunning, 1995; Kunda, 1990; Sedikides et al., 2003). Most past research, however, has focused on how individuals enhance their own self-views, without considering the role of others in helping to promote or maintain these views. Yet, humans are social beings who evolved to be aware of others'

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wants and needs (Doherty, 2008; Leslie et al., 2004) and to behave in ways that benefit others (Caporael et al., 1989; Rushton et al., 1981; Schroeder et al., 1995). Thus, this research investigated the extent to which people promote positive self-views *for others*.

Selecting information for others is likely important to preserve others' positive self-views. Somewhat surprisingly, however, the study of information selection has been circumscribed to how individuals select information for themselves rather than for others. For example, classic research on cognitive dissonance has shown that protecting one's self-view is a primary motive for information selection (Aronson et al., 1995; Festinger, 1954), although accuracy and impression motives also matter (Hart et al., 2009). However, whether and when similar selection processes are activated on behalf of others is currently unclear, creating a gap that this article seeks to fill.

## Selecting Information for Others

Past research on interpersonal interaction and communication has investigated how people deliver news and provide feedback in specific contexts. People prefer to convey flattering information to others (e.g., Gallrein et al., 2019; Larson, 1986; Rosen & Tesser, 1970; Weenig et al., 2001; Yariv, 2006), avoid communicating negative information (Camden et al., 1984; Rosen & Tesser, 1970; Tesser et al., 1972) and are even willing to tell lies for others' sake (i.e., white lies, Camden et al., 1984). People avoid sharing negative performance feedback to prevent negative emotions for both those providing and receiving feedback (Smith et al., 2000), prevents violating politeness norms (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Fay et al., 2012), and protects interpersonal relationships (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Camden et al., 1984). However, the literature on interpersonal feedback has generally concerned with specific settings (e.g., within organizations and schools), face-to-face communication, and a preexisting relationship the person providing feedback wants to protect. In addition, the work on interpersonal feedback has mostly been conducted in contexts where the recipient of feedback can complain or leave the relationship, potentially having a negative impact on the person providing feedback. Therefore, whether people select flattering information for unknown others (i.e., strangers) as a general phenomenon remains a question, as do the motivations that underlie information sharing in these contexts.

Curating information environments for others has also been investigated in the context of managing impressions for others. People manipulate available information by, for example, catering the description of a friend to the preferences of an attractive potential date (Argo et al., 2011; Schlenker & Britt, 1999, 2001). This vicarious impression management is more likely when those providing the information are empathetic and feel close to the ones being described (Argo et al., 2011; Pontari & Schlenker, 2004; Schlenker & Britt, 2001). Most of the research on vicarious impression management, however, has focused on providing information to a third party in the context of interpersonal goals. How information is selected for the person in question, in contrast, remains unexplored.

Altruism is another important stream of research relevant to providing enhancing information to others. People are capable of behaving in a way that benefits others even when there is no gain for the self (Batson & Shaw, 1991; Bereczkei et al., 2010; Semmann et

al., 2005; Thoits & Hewitt, 2001). Not only do people benefit others in the workplace (Grant & Mayer, 2009; Rioux & Penner, 2001), but they also do so with others in the absence of a prior relationship. From donating to those in need in remote areas to helping strangers on the street to showing generosity in economic games against their personal interest (Eckel & Grossman, 1996), people often behave in ways that are other-oriented (Andreoni & Miller, 2002; Oda et al., 2014). However, there is limited insight into how altruistic motives may be implicated in sharing information for others.

Interpersonal feedback practices, vicarious impression management, and altruism all suggest that people are sensitive to others' needs and can behave in ways that enhance others even when there is no direct benefit for the self. Moreover, people are equipped with a theory of mind (e.g., Gallagher & Frith, 2003; Leslie et al., 2004) that sensitizes them to others' desire to maintain a positive self-view (Heine et al., 1999; Yamaguchi et al., 2007). As a result, they should be able to select information to enhance others' self-views. In fact, individuals do what they do for themselves for other people as well, as in the case of vicarious goal setting and satisfaction (McCulloch et al., 2011).

Given people's capacity to sense others' needs and behave for others' benefit, we hypothesized that individuals can select information to help others maintain positive self-views. Despite research on determinants of information sharing on social media (Ha & Ahn, 2011; Kim et al., 2021; Osatuyi, 2013), the dynamics of information sharing remain a question. Thus, this research serves as an initial test of whether people can serve as information filters for others by sharing information to maintain someone else's positive self-view, even when the other is a stranger. Along the way, however, we also considered whether people choose information that agrees with the other's view irrespective of whether the information is flattering or not. After all, people often want to be right in their understanding of themselves (e.g., Swann, 2012; Swann et al., 1989, 2003), making self-verification potentially important in selecting information for others (Osatuyi, 2013).

## Preconditions for Other-Enhancing Information Selection

Likability is one of the major dimensions of person perception (Anderson, 1968; Bocian et al., 2018; Dumas et al., 2002). As someone becomes more likable, people are more likely to notice their needs and wants, take their perspectives, and provide help (Appelbaum, 2002; Dovidio et al., 1997; Miller & Bersoff, 1998). Accordingly, as someone becomes more likable, people are also more likely to assist them in upholding a positive image of themselves (Fitzpatrick & Noller, 1990; Gottman et al., 1998; Swann et al., 1992). In other words, people are more focused on considering what others want and feel when the others are likable, making the desire to maintain social relationships a critical goal when interacting with likable others (Prislin & Wood, 2005; Tetlock & Manstead, 1985).

Given that likable others can lead to stronger affiliation goals (Sinclair et al., 2005), how likable others are is likely to drive the information one selects for them. Therefore, a person's likability may moderate the extent to which they receive self-enhancing information from others, with more self-enhancing information being selected for likable (vs. dislikable) others. Thus, selecting flattering information for others may be driven by

the desire to maintain a good relationship with them. However, social concerns are not the only consideration when selecting information for others. Instead, people are often motivated by accuracy concerns and seek unflattering information as long as it is useful for them (Chaiken et al., 1996; Hart et al., 2009). Although accuracy considerations have received little attention in the interpersonal domain, those who select information may share information that is objectively true and helpful for others irrespective of whether or not the information enhances the others' self-views.

Do these two motivations underlie how people select information for others? And does the other person's likability influence social considerations, thus leading to differential other-enhancing behaviors for likable and dislikable targets? Can accuracy considerations moderate these effects? We examined these questions in this work.

## The Current Research

We conducted seven experiments to investigate whether people help others maintain a positive self-view by selecting relatively more information that enhances versus diminishes the others' self-view. We also examined whether this tendency depends on the likability of others, as likability is one of the main attributes that guide people's behaviors toward others (A. J. C. Cuddy et al., 2007; Dovidio et al., 1997; Miller & Bersoff, 1998). Specifically, we tested this question in two domains: personality and intelligence. Participants learned about other people's performance on either a personality or an intelligence test and then chose whether to share information about the test that would enhance or diminish the other's self-view.

In past research, how participants process and interpret information depends on their need for retaining a positive self-view (Jussim et al., 1987; Kunda, 1987; Smalley & Stake, 1996). People who fail at a task can regain self-worth by invalidating the test (Kay et al., 2002; Wilson et al., 2004), whereas those who do well can further enhance their self-view by endorsing it. In our research, participants selected information not for themselves but for others who had taken a test. This approach allowed us to test whether participants make the same information choices about test validity or invalidity for others as they do for themselves. Specifically, participants were instructed to select test information for another person to read after they learned about the other's performance and views about the test. Other-enhancing information would involve selecting information that a test is valid, when the other performed well and thinks the test is valid and information that the test is invalid, when the other performed poorly and thinks the test is invalid. Conversely, other-diminishing information would involve selecting information that a test is invalid, when the other performed well and thinks the test is valid and information that the test is valid, when the other performed poorly and thinks the test is invalid. Because people's information selection behavior in the other-enhancing context could be driven by the difference in selecting enhancing information, diminishing information, or both types of information, to have a full picture of how people select information for others, we focused on the relative selection of enhancing information to diminishing information as our main indication of people's other-enhancing tendency. We consider participants' behavior to be other-enhancing when they selected more other-enhancing information than other-diminishing information.

In Experiment 1, we tested whether participants would select information to enhance the other's self-view and whether this selection is contingent on the other's likability. Experiment 2 investigated the same issue as Experiment 1 while further comparing the other's likability and competence as moderators of the information selection. In Experiment 3, we moved from a personality test to an intelligence test and also measured the possible social and instrumental drivers of the information selection.

Experiments 1–3 all included an omnibus manipulation where the other was described as either performing well and thinking that the test was valid, or performing poorly and thinking that the test was invalid. Hence, in all cases, the test takers expressed self-enhancing views. In Experiment 4, we were interested in ruling out the possibility that participants might select information not to enhance the other's self-views but to verify their self-views. Thus, we specifically examined whether participants continued to enhance the others when others did not express self-enhancing views. In Experiment 5a and 5b, we considered whether participants selected information that enhances the other's self-view even when they knew that the information was incorrect, which was not the case in prior experiments. Finally, Experiment 6 considered whether providing an accuracy goal could weaken the tendency to choose enhancing information for others.

Six out of the seven experiments reported here were preregistered and all materials and data are available on the OSF ([https://osf.io/6rejs/?view\\_only=9cde0a008acf4c57a33501620355d526](https://osf.io/6rejs/?view_only=9cde0a008acf4c57a33501620355d526)). All sample sizes were predetermined, and we report all manipulations, measures, and data exclusions across studies. A description of the manipulations in each experiment appears in Table 1.

## Experiment 1

Experiment 1 examined the hypothesis that people select information to bolster others' self-views. Specifically, we examined whether somebody, even a stranger, might select information that would enhance the recipients' self-views. We further tested whether the likability of the partner influences the selection of enhancing versus diminishing information.

### Method

**Participants and Design:** We recruited 550 U.S. participants through Prolific Academic. We excluded participants who failed our attention check, leaving a final sample of 503 (248 women, 240 men, 10 nonbinary;  $M_{\text{age}} = 42.17$ ,  $SD_{\text{age}} = 14.89$ ). Three hundred seventy-two self-identify as White, 51 Black, 31 Hispanic, 37 Asian, three Native American, and six other). We randomly assigned participants to a between-participants 3 (likability: likable, neutral, and dislikable)  $\times$  2 (partner's performance and view of the test: good performance and view the test as valid vs. poor performance and view the test as invalid) factorial design. A sensitivity power analysis showed that this sample size was sufficient to detect an overall interaction between likability, partner's performance, and information direction at an effect size as small as  $f = 0.08$  with 80% power.

**Study Procedures:** Participants were told that, in the context of another study, we were testing a new, quick, and easy-to-administer personality test called MEQ, and we wanted their help in selecting articles regarding the test to be provided to the test takers in the other study. Participants learned that they would be connected with a “partner”—the target—who was taking the test, and that, before they were connected, the participant and their future partner would provide information to each other, including their gender, favorite color, leisure activities, unique traits, and personal values (see Supplemental Materials for details). After participants answered those questions about themselves, they were told to wait to receive the information from their partners.

The information that the partners ostensibly provided was, in reality, our manipulation of likability. A dislikable partner ostensibly left offensive responses; a likable one ostensibly wrote socially appropriate answers; and a control partner left no information. After seeing this information, participants were told to wait for their partner to complete the test. To support this cover story, during this wait time, participants completed a filler task that involved writing about mundane life experiences such as buying groceries, ordering a pizza, or boarding a plane.

Participants were told that they would be directed to the next part of the study when their partner completed the test. After participants waited for their partner to complete their task, they were directed to the next part of the study and were asked to select articles about the test to give to their partner. Before this, participants received a brief note from their partner explaining how they performed on the test. The partner who performed poorly ostensibly indicated:

They said to say something about the test. From the scoring, I guess I did really bad. I bet this test is complete garbage and doesn't measure my personality. It's not a good test. They said you give me thiungs (sic) to read about the test now.

The partner who performed well ostensibly said:

They said to say something about the test. From the scoring, I guess I did really well. I bet this test is a good and genuine measure of my personality. It's a good test. They said you give me thiungs (sic) to read about the test now.

Thus, this manipulation jointly manipulated the partner's performance and views of the test, an aspect that was maintained in Experiments 1–3 but was later manipulated or altered (Experiments 4–7).

After learning about the partner's test results, participants were given eight article titles that summarized the main thesis of each article, four touting the validity of the personality test and four questioning it (see Supplemental Materials). For example, an article touting the validity of the test read “The MEQ personality test is a highly valid test. In fact, it correlates with later success in one's career,” whereas the article questioning the test's validity read “The MEQ is not valid. High scores reflect nothing more than the ability to answer questions well, not necessarily positive personality traits.” The presentation of the articles was randomized and participants were asked to choose articles that they thought their partner should read using a selective exposure task with article titles (Fischer et al.,

2005; Frey & Wicklund, 1978). We indicated that there was no right or wrong way of making the choices. After participants completed the article selection task, they provided ratings of the partner, completed demographic questions, and were debriefed and dismissed.

## Dependent Measures

**Likability Manipulation Check:** After participants completed the article selection task, they rated their partners on likability, warmth, and coldness (reverse-coded), and reported their liking for their partner. These four items were accompanied by 9-point scales and were averaged into a summary index of likability ( $\alpha > .90$  across studies).

**Selection of Other-Enhancing Versus Diminishing Information:** We calculated the number of enhancing and diminishing articles each participant selected for their partner to read. Enhancing articles were those that supported the partner's self-serving view about the test (i.e., the test is valid when they performed well or the test is invalid when they performed poorly). Diminishing articles were those that opposed the partner's self-serving view about the test (i.e., the test is valid when they performed well or the test is invalid when they performed badly). Thus, these two measures are our primary dependent variables, each varying from 0 to 4.

## Results and Discussion

**Manipulation Check:** We first examined whether the likability manipulation was successful. As expected, there was a main effect of the partner likability manipulation,  $F(2, 500) = 150.26, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .38$ . Participants in the likable partner condition rated their partner as more likable ( $M = 5.99, SD = 1.61$ ) than those in the neutral condition, ( $M = 4.94, SD = 1.60$ ),  $t(500)_{\text{likable-neutral}} = 5.84, p < .001, d = 0.65$ , followed by those in the dislikable condition ( $M = 2.85, SD = 1.77$ ),  $t(500)_{\text{neutral-dislikable}} = 5.84, p < .001, d = 0.65$ .

**Information Selection:** We next tested the primary hypothesis that participants would choose other-enhancing information more than other-diminishing information, particularly for partners they liked. We thus conducted an analysis of variance (ANOVA) of the number of chosen articles as a function of 2 (information direction: enhancing or diminishing) as a within-participants factor  $\times$  3 (partner likability: likable, neutral, or dislikable)  $\times$  2 (partner's performance and view of the test: good performance and think the test is valid or bad performance and think the test is invalid) as two between-participants factors. Results are presented in Table 2 and Figure 1. As predicted, we found a significant two-way interaction between partner likability and information direction (Figure 1),  $F(2, 497) = 8.37, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .03$ . Participants selected significantly more other-enhancing information ( $M_{\text{likable}} = 2.05, SD = 1.42$ ;  $M_{\text{neutral}} = 2.01, SD = 1.38$ ) than other-diminishing information ( $M_{\text{likable}} = 1.35, SD = 1.29$ ;  $M_{\text{neutral}} = 1.56, SD = 1.42$ ) for likable partners,  $F(1, 497) = 15.53, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .03$ , and neutral partners,  $F(1, 497) = 6.46, p = .01, \eta_p^2 = .01$ . In contrast, participants selected a similar amount of other enhancing ( $M = 1.69, SD = 1.54$ ) and diminishing information ( $M = 2.00, SD = 1.53$ ) for nonlikable partners,  $F(1, 497) = 2.83, p = .09, \eta_p^2 = .006$ .



The results in Table 2 indicate that participants chose to enhance likable and neutral others by selecting more enhancing than diminishing information for them. We further examined the selection of enhancing and diminishing information across partner likability conditions. The selection of enhancing information showed a marginal effect as a function of partner likability,  $F(2, 500) = 2.74, p = .07, \eta_p^2 = .01$ . Participants selected significantly less enhancing information for the dislikable partner compared to the likable partner,  $t(500) = -2.22, p = .03, d = 0.24$ , but did not differ from the neutral partner,  $t(500) = -1.80, p = .07, d = 0.19$ . The difference between neutral and likable partners did not differ in terms of selection of enhancing information,  $t(500) = -0.45, p = .65, d = 0.06$ . The selection of diminishing information, however, was significant,  $F(2, 500) = 7.88, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .03$ . Participants selected significantly more diminishing information for the dislikable than both the likable partner,  $t(500) = 3.93, p < .001, d = 0.44$ , and the neutral partner,  $t(500) = 2.44, p = .02, d = 0.26$ , while the neutral and likable partner conditions did not differ from each other,  $t(500) = 1.57, p = .12, d = 0.18$ .

The two-way interaction between the partner's performance and view of the test and information direction was also significant,  $F(1, 497) = 8.35, p = .004, \eta_p^2 = .02$ . When the partner did well and thought that the test was valid, participants selected more enhancing ( $M = 2.07, SD = 1.43$ ) than diminishing information ( $M = 1.49, SD = 1.37$ ) for them,  $F(1, 497) = 16.15, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .03$ . In contrast, when their partner did poorly and thought that the test was invalid, participants provided similar numbers of enhancing ( $M = 1.76, SD = 1.46$ ) and diminishing articles ( $M = 1.78, SD = 1.49$ ),  $F(1, 497) = 0.02, p = .89, \eta_p^2 = .001$ . Although we did not expect these results, these findings showed that participants provided more self-enhancing information for those who performed well on the personality test than those who performed badly on the test, suggesting that people were more likely to help enhance those who showed objective evidence (i.e., the test result) in support of their self-enhancing view. One possibility is that a good result on the personality test makes the test taker more likable regardless of the manipulated likability. However, the three-way interaction between partner likability, information direction, and performance was not significant,  $F(2, 497) = 0.90, p = .41, \eta_p^2 = .004$ , implying that how people selected enhancing information for their partners varied on likability and applied similarly to conditions in which others had performed poorly or well (see Table 2).

Experiment 1 showed initial evidence that participants helped to enhance others' self-views by selectively choosing information for others to see. Specifically, participants selected information about the test validity depending on others' performance and view on the personality task. Furthermore, such other-enhancing behavior only happened for likable and neutral others, but not when the other person was dislikable.

## Experiment 2

In Experiment 1, participants selected more information that strengthened their partners' positive self-view than information that diminished it as long as their partners were either likable or neutral. However, they selected similar amounts of partner-enhancing and challenging information when the partners were dislikable. We conducted Experiment 2 to replicate Experiment 1 while ruling out the possibility that the likability manipulation



might have also affected perceptions of the partners' competence. For example, the likability manipulation could have created a halo effect, with likable others being perceived as, for example, more competent. To ensure that it is the partner's likability that matters, we added the additional measure of competence, one of the other basic dimension in person judgment (A. J. Cuddy et al., 2008; Fiske, 2018), allowing for a more precise consideration of whether likability or other factors influenced our results.

## Method

**Participants:** We recruited 600 U.S. participants through Prolific Academic. We excluded participants who failed our memory check, leaving a final sample of 530 (270 women, 249 men, six nonbinary;  $M_{\text{age}} = 42.30$ ,  $SD_{\text{age}} = 14.44$ . Three hundred sixty-one self-identify as White, 60 Black, 37 Hispanic, 46 Asian, three Native American, and 23 other). Our sample size, exclusion criteria and main predictions were preregistered at <https://aspredicted.org/pm8k-f9z6.pdf>. Sensitivity analysis showed that this sample size allowed us to detect an overall interaction between likability, partner's performance, and information direction at an effect size as small as  $f = 0.08$  with 80% power.

**Design:** The design of this experiment was the same as Experiment 1, except for one change. After participants completed the article selection task, they answered questions regarding perceived partner competence, including being hardworking, competitive, and lazy (reverse-coded). Similar to the partner likability index, we computed a composite score for partner competence ( $\alpha = .71$ ).

## Results and Discussion

**Manipulation Check:** Again, the manipulation of partner likability was successful. There was a main effect of partner likability,  $F(2, 527) = 180.09$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .41$ . Participants who were in the likable partner condition rated their partner as more likable ( $M = 5.99$ ,  $SD = 1.49$ ) than those in the neutral condition ( $M = 5.07$ ,  $SD = 1.65$ ),  $t(361)_{\text{likable-neutral}} = 5.3$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 0.58$ , followed by those in the dislikable condition ( $M = 2.74$ ,  $SD = 1.75$ ),  $t(350)_{\text{neutral-dislikable}} = 13.42$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 1.37$ .

**Information Selection:** We conducted a 2 (information direction: enhance or diminish)  $\times$  3 (partner likability: likable, neutral, or dislikable)  $\times$  2 (partner's performance and view of the test: good performance and think the test is valid or bad performance and think the test is invalid) ANOVA with the first-factor being within-participants and the latter two factors being between-participants. These results appear in Table 3 and Figure 1. Replicating results from Experiment 1, the two-way interaction between partner likability and information direction was significant (Figure 2),  $F(2, 524) = 13.84$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .05$ . Participants selected significantly more enhancing information ( $M_{\text{likable}} = 2.05$ ,  $SD = 1.44$ ;  $M_{\text{neutral}} = 2.15$ ,  $SD = 1.48$ ) than diminishing information ( $M_{\text{likable}} = 1.33$ ,  $SD = 1.38$ ;  $M_{\text{neutral}} = 1.52$ ,  $SD = 1.48$ ) for likable partners,  $F(1, 524) = 16.04$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .03$ , and neutral partners,  $F(1, 524) = 12.67$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .02$ . However, when the partner was not likable, participants selected more diminishing ( $M = 1.96$ ,  $SD = 1.56$ ) than enhancing ( $M = 1.45$ ,  $SD = 1.46$ ) information for their partners,  $F(1, 524) = 7.35$ ,  $p = .01$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .01$ .

We also examined the selection of enhancing and diminishing information separately as a function of partner likability. There was a significant direct effect of partner likability for selecting enhancing information,  $F(2, 527) = 11.26, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .04$ . Participants selected much less enhancing information for the dislikable than the likable partner,  $t(527) = -3.87, p < .001, d = 0.42$ , or the neutral partner,  $t(527) = -4.37, p < .001, d = 0.46$ , which did not differ from each other,  $t(527)_{\text{likable versus neutral partner}} = -0.48, p = .63, d = 0.05$ . There was also a significant effect of partner likability on the selection of diminishing information,  $F(2, 527) = 8.26, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .03$ . Participants selected more diminishing information for the dislikable than the likable partner,  $t(527) = 4.01, p < .001, d = 0.43$ , and neutral partner,  $t(527) = 2.59, p < .001, d = 0.27$ , which again were similar to each other,  $t(527)_{\text{likable versus neutral partner}} = -1.49, p = .14, d = 0.16$ . In other words, the different selection patterns were driven by both the diminishing and the enhancing information for the dislikable partner, with the effects on enhancing information being clearer here than in Experiment 1.

The two-way interaction between partner's performance and view and information direction was also significant,  $F(1, 524) = 11.37, p = .001, \eta_p^2 = .02$ . When the partner ostensibly did poorly and thought the test was invalid, there was no difference between the amount of enhancing ( $M = 1.75, SD = 1.51$ ) and diminishing information selection ( $M = 1.82, SD = 1.60$ ),  $F(1, 524) = 0.23, p = .63, \eta_p^2 = .001$ . When people did well and thought they did well and the test was valid, people selected more enhancing ( $M = 2.03, SD = 1.45$ ) than diminishing information ( $M = 1.39, SD = 1.34$ ),  $F(1, 524) = 17.91, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .03$ . As in Experiment 1, however, the three-way interaction between partner likability, information direction, and partner's performance and view of the test was not significant,  $F(2, 524) = 1.74, p = .18, \eta_p^2 = .01$ , again implying that participants selected flattering information regardless of the partner's performance and view (see Table 3).

**Information Selection as a Function of Partner Likability and Competence:** To examine whether partner likability predicts the extent to which people select enhancing information relative to diminishing information, we first calculated a selection bias score by subtracting the selected number of diminishing information from the selected number of enhancing information, and then used the composite score of partner likability and partner competence to predict the selection bias score. Consistent with the above analysis, partner likability was a significant predictor for selection bias ( $B = 0.36, SE = .08$ );  $t(527) = 4.79, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.21, 0.51]$ , while partner competence did not predict selection bias ( $B = -0.01, SE = .09$ );  $t(527) = -0.15, p = .88, 95\% \text{ CI } [-0.19, 0.17]$ .

In summary, Experiment 2 replicated our finding from Experiment 1, such that participants again chose more information that would confirm others' self-enhancement view than those that would diminish it. We also showed that the other person's likability, but not competence, predicted the extent to which participants helped others to self-enhance.

## Experiment 3

In Experiments 1 and 2, we showed that people help others enhance their beliefs about the self by providing flattering information about their personality, a domain central to person judgments. Specifically, participants selected more enhancing than diminishing

information for others. This pattern was especially pronounced when the partner was likable or neutral. To extend these findings, in Experiment 3, we changed the domain of the test from personality to intelligence. Intelligence is another dimension central to people's self-knowledge and could provide evidence for the generalizability of our findings. Describing the test as an intelligence test also removes the potential confounding effect in the first two studies where the domain of the test—personality—might overlap with the likability manipulation. With that overlap, the target's performance on the test could have been seen as evidence that either confirms or disconfirms their likability. In contrast, using an intelligence test ensures that it did not confound with the likability manipulation. In addition, we measured people's social and instrumental considerations as possible drivers of the other-enhancing information selection for likable and neutral others.

## Method

**Participants:** This study was preregistered at <https://aspredicted.org/gvyx-x5mn.pdf>. We recruited 600 U.S. participants through Prolific Academic. We excluded participants who failed our memory check, leaving a final sample of 535 (269 women, 259 men, five nonbinary;  $M_{\text{age}} = 42.10$ ,  $SD_{\text{age}} = 15.05$ ). Three hundred seventy-six self-identify as White, 65 Black, 32 Hispanic, 46 Asian, three Native American, and 13 other). A sensitivity power analysis showed that this sample size was sufficient to detect an overall interaction between likability, partner's performance, and information direction at an effect size as small as  $f = 0.08$  with 80% power.

**Design:** The design of this study was the same as Experiment 1 with two exceptions. First, we described the test as measuring intelligence instead of personality. Second, we measured social and instrumental motives participants might consider when selecting information for their partners. These measures thus allowed us to directly explore the mechanisms involved in the selection through mediation analyses.

**Dependent Measures:** We measured likability and information selection in the same way as Experiment 1. In addition, we included 11 items measuring the reasons for choosing information for the partner. Participants indicated whether they had made their choices (a) "to provide truthful feedback," (b) "to be objective," (c) "to choose the information that would be most helpful for my partner," (d) "to feel like I am a good person," (e) "to avoid disagreeing with my partner," (f) "to avoid being disliked by my partner," (g) "to make a good impression on my partner," (h) "to avoid hurting my partner's feelings," and (i) "to trust my partner's judgment about the test" and (j) "to make my partner feel good."<sup>1</sup>

## Results and Discussion

**Manipulation Check:** As in the previous experiments, partner likability was successfully manipulated. As indicated by a main effect of partner likability,  $F(2, 532) = 162.71$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .38$ , participants in the likable partner condition rated their partner as more likable ( $M = 5.99$ ,  $SD = 1.62$ ) than those in the neutral one ( $M = 5.02$ ,  $SD = 1.49$ ),

<sup>1</sup>"To meet the expectation of the researchers" was among the original items measured but was not included in the composite score given its low factor loadings. (see Figure 4.)

$t(359)_{\text{likable-neutral}} = 5.61, p < .001, d = 0.62$ , followed by those in the dislikable condition ( $M = 2.91, SD = 1.81$ ),  $t(348)_{\text{neutral-dislikable}} = 11.97, p < .001, d = 1.27$ .

**Information Selection:** We again examined if participants selected other-enhancing information for likable and neutral partners now that the test concerned intelligence instead of personality. The same analyses conducted before showed that, as predicted, the two-way interaction between partner likability and information direction was significant,  $F(2, 529) = 18.81, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .07$  (results are presented in Table 4 and Figure 1). Participants selected significantly more enhancing information ( $M_{\text{likable}} = 2.35, SD = 1.42; M_{\text{neutral}} = 2.20, SD = 1.53$ ) than diminishing information ( $M_{\text{likable}} = 1.62, SD = 1.49; M_{\text{neutral}} = 1.80, SD = 1.51$ ) for likable partners,  $F(1, 529) = 15.40, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .03$ , and neutral partners,  $F(1, 529) = 4.42, p = .04, \eta_p^2 = .01$ . However, they selected more diminishing ( $M = 2.36, SD = 1.56$ ) than enhancing information ( $M = 1.53, SD = 1.53$ ) for dilikable partners,  $F(1, 529) = 18.89, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .03$ .

We also compared selection of enhancing and diminishing information for each partner type, finding an effect of partner likability on enhancing information,  $F(2, 532) = 15.68, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .06$ . Participants selected less enhancing information for the dislikable than the likable partner,  $t(532) = -5.25, p < .001, d = 0.56$ , and neutral partner,  $t(532) = -4.25, p < .001, d = 0.44$ , which did not differ from each other,  $t(532)_{\text{likable versus neutral partner}} = -0.97, p = .33, d = 0.10$ . The selection of diminishing information also differed by partner likability,  $F(2, 532) = 11.75, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .04$ . Participants selected more diminishing information for the dislikable than the likable partner,  $t(532) = 4.66, p < .001, d = 0.49$ , and neutral partner,  $t(532) = 3.53, p < .001, d = 0.37$ , which did not differ from each other,  $t(532)_{\text{likable versus neutral partner}} = 1.09, p = .28, d = 0.12$ . These results again showed that the impact of partner likability was driven both by an increase in the selection of diminishing information and a decrease in the selection of enhancing information for the dislikable other.

Different from before, the two-way interaction between partner's performance and view of the test and information direction was not significant,  $F(1, 529) = 1.45, p = .23, \eta_p^2 = .003$ . Further, as in the previous experiments, the overall interaction between information direction, partner likability, and partner's performance/view of the test was not significant,  $F(2, 529) = 0.74, p = .48, \eta_p^2 = .003$  (see Table 4).

**Factors Mediating Other-Enhancing Selection:** We asked participants a series of questions regarding the factors they were considering when selecting information for others, including questions like (e.g., "to make my partner feel good" and "to provide truthful feedback" (see Table 5), on a 9-point scale with 1 being *did not consider this factor at all* and 9 being *completely considered this factor*. An exploratory factor analysis was conducted using the principle components method with varimax rotation. Communalities range from .36 to .74 (Table 5). Two factors were extracted with Eigenvalues greater than 1 for both. We included strongly loading items (.50 or better) for each factor. We labeled factor 1 "social considerations" and factor 2 "instrumental considerations." The social consideration factor accounted for 43.54% of total variance, and the instrumental consideration factor accounted

for 20.10% of the total variance. We calculated a composite score for each of the factors to study as possible mediators of our effects.

We examined the mediating effect of both factors between partner likability and the selection bias score using a PROCESS 95% bias-corrected CI based on 5,000 bootstrapped samples (Model 4, Hayes, 2012). Using an indicator coding with the dislikable partner condition as the reference group, we found that the effect of the neutral partner condition relative to the dislikable partner condition indirectly influenced the selection bias score through higher social considerations ( $a_1b = 0.39$ , 95% CI [0.18, 0.62].) Relative to the dislikable partner condition, the effect of the likable partner condition on enhancement bias was also mediated by social considerations ( $a_2b = 0.53$ , 95% CI [0.31, 0.78]). The instrumental considerations did not mediate the effect of partner likability on enhancement bias ( $a_1b = .07$ , 95% CI [-0.01, 0.18];  $a_2b = .01$ , 95% CI [-0.07, 0.10]).

In sum, we extended our findings by changing the domain of the test from personality to intelligence, another central dimension of person perception. We found that when the test was about intelligence, a domain about which participants had no knowledge, participants still chose information that would benefit the self-views of likable and neutral others.

## Experiment 4

In the previous experiments, we had only conditions where people expressed views that were consistent with self-enhancement motives. That is, participants learned that those who performed well on the test thought that the test was valid whereas those who performed poorly thought that the test was invalid. Although maintaining a positive self-view is a strong and common motivation, it does not apply to everyone. People whose self-view is more grounded in reality, even when it is negative can express self-views that do not conform with the enhancement account (Gallrein et al., 2019; Swann, 1997; Swann et al., 1989). Thus, in this experiment, we added conditions where partners ostensibly expressed nonenhancement views, thus reporting views on the validity of the test that were orthogonal to their own test performance. This allowed us to further test whether participants select information to enhance others' self-views or to *verify* others' self-views. If participants select information only to verify others' views, we would expect them to select more information that is consistent with others' expressed view of the test, regardless of whether it is self-enhancing or self-diminishing. In contrast, if people specifically help others to enhance, then we should observe the selection of information that is other-enhancing irrespective of the test takers' view about the validity of the test. This possibility was tested with likable others.

## Method

**Participants:** We recruited 400 U.S. participants through Prolific Academic. We excluded participants who failed our memory check, leaving a final sample of 348 (170 women, 166 men, 11 nonbinary, one prefer not to disclose;  $M_{\text{age}} = 40.38$ ,  $SD_{\text{age}} = 15.04$ . Two hundred twenty-eight self-identify as White, 40 Black, 27 Hispanic, 38 Asian, three Native American, and 12 other). It was preregistered at <https://aspredicted.org/n6zy-9t57.pdf>. A sensitivity power analysis showed that this sample size was sufficient to detect an interaction

between information verification and partner view of the test at an effect size as small as  $f = 0.08$  with 80% power.

**Design:** As in Experiment 3, we described the MEQ test as a measure of intelligence. All participants were connected to a likable partner and were randomly assigned to one of four conditions based on a 2 (partner performance: good or bad)  $\times$  2 (view of the test: valid or invalid) between-participants design. Participants expressed self-enhancing views in two of the conditions, specifically when the partner who ostensibly performed well reported that the test was valid and when the partner who ostensibly performed poorly reported that the test was invalid. In the other two conditions, participants did not express self-enhancing views. In particular, the partner who ostensibly performed well reported that the test was invalid

They said to say something about the test. From the scoring, I guess I did really well. I feel happy. But I've never felt smart. I bet this test is complete garbage and doesn't measure intelligence the way it should. They said you give me things to read about the test now.

And the partner who ostensibly performed poorly reported that the test was valid

They said to say something about the test. From the scoring, I guess I did poorly. I'm disappointed. But I've never felt smart. I bet this test is valid and is a genuine measure of intelligence. They said you give me things to read about the test now.

## Results and Discussion

**Information Selection:** This study provided a unique opportunity to examine if the combined effect of the partner's performance on and view of the test was due to self-enhancement. In particular, if participants made selections to enhance their partners, then they should continue to select information that the test is valid when the partner performs well and that it is invalid when the partner performs poorly irrespective of their partner's expressed view of the test validity. In contrast, if participants made selections to verify the partners' views of the test validity, then their partners' views of the test should drive the selection. Accordingly, we defined verifying information as information that is consistent with the partner's expressed view of the test validity, while un verifying information is inconsistent with the partner's expressed view of the test validity. If our results from previous studies are a result of verifying their partner's self-enhancing views, we would expect participants to always select more verifying than un verifying information regardless of their partner's self-views. But if participants are specifically positioned to enhance others, then we would expect participants to select more verifying information when others expressed self-enhancing views but not self-diminishing views.

To determine if other enhancement or verification prevailed, we conducted a 2 (information's verification status: verifying or un verifying)  $\times$  2 (partner's view of the test: self-enhancing or not self-enhancing) ANOVA where the first factor was within-participants and the second between-participants (results are presented in Table 6 and Figure 2). Findings indicated that participants did select more verifying information ( $M = 2.43$ ,  $SD = 1.38$ ) than un verifying information ( $M = 1.47$ ,  $SD = 1.51$ ) for their partner when their partner expressed self-enhancing views,  $F(1, 346) = 26.58$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .07$ . However, when partners



expressed diminishing self-views, participants selected more unverifying information ( $M = 2.60$ ,  $SD = 1.48$ ) than verifying information ( $M = 1.30$ ,  $SD = 1.46$ ),  $F(1, 346) = 42.96$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .11$ . This effect was qualified by a significant two-way interaction (Figure 2),  $F(1, 346) = 69.05$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .17$ , suggesting that participants did not select verifying information across the board. Instead, when participants expressed enhancing views about the self, participants selected more verifying information, meaning they selected more enhancing information for others. When participants expressed self-diminishing views, participants selected more unverifying information, meaning that they still selected more enhancing information in those cases (see Table 6).

In a nutshell, Experiment 4 further showed the robustness of the other-enhancing behaviors. Even when people did not express self-enhancing views, participants continued to choose information that would help the partners to maintain a self-enhancing view. The results also ruled out the possibility that the findings from previous studies are due to people's tendency to simply verify others' views of the self.

## Experiment 5

Accuracy motivation—the motive to deliver an objective judgment that reflects the truth—is one of the major motivations that drives the way people make judgments and decisions (Chaiken, 1980). In the previous experiments, we did not provide any third-party information about the test's validity. Thus, it is possible that our participants simply lacked objective information but they would select it even if it were detrimental to the partner's self-view. To examine whether people choose other-enhancing information even when it contradicts objective information, in this study, we introduced participants to ostensibly objective validity information about the test. If participants are mostly concerned with providing accurate information for others, then they will likely select information by following the provided objective test validity information, even when it hurts the other person's self-view. Thus, Experiments 5a and b served as a stringent test of the other-enhancing phenomenon we identified in the previous experiments. Experiment 5b serves as a replication of 5a with a larger sample.

### Experiment 5a

#### Method

**Participants:** We recruited 500 U.S. participants through Prolific Academic. We excluded participants who failed our memory check, leaving a final sample of 369 (188 women, 173 men, five nonbinary, three prefer not to disclose;  $M_{\text{age}} = 41.79$ ,  $SD_{\text{age}} = 13.89$ . Two hundred thirty-three self-identify as White, 55 Black, 26 Hispanic, 45 Asian, one Native American, and nine other). It was preregistered at <https://aspredicted.org/fhdr-89f9.pdf>. A sensitivity power analysis showed that this sample size was sufficient to detect an overall interaction between information validity and partner's view of the test at an effect size as small as  $f = 0.09$  with 80% power.

**Design:** As in Experiment 4, we described the MEQ test as a measure of intelligence. Participants were randomly assigned to connect with either a likable or a dislikable partner

like in Experiment 1. However, differing from the prior experiments, all partners ostensibly performed poorly on the test. Also, unlike in previous studies, they did not express any opinion regarding the test's validity, thus eliminating the possibility that participants were simply agreeing with their partner's opinions. Instead, the partners said "They said to say something about the test. From the scoring, I guess I did poorly. I did not expect this result." In this way, participants did not learn their partner's personal views of the test, making the selection results unlikely to be a result of demand effects.

Critically, we also manipulated the test's objective validity. In the no objective validity information condition, participants followed the same study procedure as in previous studies with no mention of the test's objective validity. In the objectively valid information condition, participants first read that the test has good validity, after which they proceeded to the same tasks as before. Specifically, participants read that this test was reviewed by one of the expert researchers in the field, who thinks "as a general intelligence test, I think it does a good job. It is better than many of the intelligence tests that I've seen. It covers different aspects of people's cognitive abilities and predicts real-world outcomes," thus confirming the validity of the test. If participants' major concern was to provide accurate information regarding the test's validity, they should follow the objective validity information to inform their partner that the test is valid, even if the information would diminish their partner's self-view. However, if participants wanted to bolster their partner's self-view, they should select more information that states the test is invalid given their partner's bad performance on the test.

Another change we made in this study was increasing the number of article themes to sixteen to make sure that our findings could be generalized when participants were provided with a different amount of information. Similar to before, half of the article themes stated that the test has good validity, while the other half stated that the test has poor validity (see Supplemental Materials for details). After participants selected information for their partner, they completed the same measure as in Experiment 3. Overall, the study involved a 2 (partner likability: likable or dislikable)  $\times$  2 (objective validity of the test: no information or valid) between-participants design.

## Results and Discussion

**Manipulation Check:** Partner likability was successfully manipulated, showing a significant main effect,  $F(1, 367) = 373.04, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .50$ . The likable partner ( $M = 6.05, SD = 1.46$ ) was evaluated as more likable than the dislikable partner ( $M = 2.82, SD = 1.73$ ).

**Information Selection:** This study enabled us to test whether people continue to enhance others' self-view when they have objective validity information that is at odds with the enhancing information. Because all partners ostensibly performed poorly on the test, selecting information that the test is valid would be diminishing, while selecting information that the test is invalid would be enhancing. First, we examined whether participants made enhancing information choices when there was no objective validity information about the test and their partner did not explicitly express their views regarding the validity of the test

(results are presented in Table 7 and Figure 3). Replicating our previous results, participants again selected more enhancing ( $M = 4.83$ ,  $SD = 2.70$ ) than diminishing ( $M = 2.05$ ,  $SD = 2.73$ ) information for likable partners,  $F(1, 182) = 32.72$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .15$ . However, as before, for dislikable partners, participants selected a similar amount of enhancing ( $M = 3.68$ ,  $SD = 2.99$ ) and diminishing information ( $M = 2.71$ ,  $SD = 2.95$ ),  $F(1, 182) = 3.70$ ,  $p = .06$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .02$ . These patterns were again supported by a significant two-way interaction between partner likability and information direction,  $F(1, 182) = 6.58$ ,  $p = .01$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .04$ .

In addition, the two-way interaction between information direction and test validity information was significant,  $F(1, 365) = 17.42$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .05$ . When there was no information about the test's objective validity, participants selected more enhancing ( $M = 4.26$ ,  $SD = 2.90$ ) than diminishing information ( $M = 2.38$ ,  $SD = 2.85$ ) for their partner,  $F(1, 365) = 28.26$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .07$ . However, when the test's objective validity information was provided, participants selected a similar amount of enhancing ( $M = 3.52$ ,  $SD = 2.86$ ) and diminishing information ( $M = 3.73$ ,  $SD = 3.12$ ) for their partner,  $F(1, 365) = 0.35$ ,  $p = .56$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .001$ , suggesting people in general were sensitive to the objective test validity information.

Importantly, regardless of whether the test's validity was described or not, participants again chose more enhancing ( $M = 4.65$ ,  $SD = 2.67$ ) than diminishing information ( $M = 2.57$ ,  $SD = 2.92$ ) for their partner when the partner was likable, showing a persistent tendency to enhance others in the face of contradictory evidence. However, when their partners were dislikable, participants selected a similar amount of diminishing information ( $M = 3.54$ ,  $SD = 3.13$ ) and enhancing information ( $M = 3.13$ ,  $SD = 2.92$ ). Accordingly, this differential selection of enhancing and diminishing information across partner types was verified by a significant two-way interaction between information direction and partner likability (Figure 3),  $F(1, 365) = 24.90$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .06$ . The contrasts across likability conditions led to similar conclusions. Participants selected significantly more enhancing information for the likable than the dislikable partner,  $F(1, 367) = 29.13$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .07$ . Conversely, participants selected more diminishing information for the dislikable than the likable partner,  $F(1, 367) = 11.61$ ,  $p = .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .03$ . The overall three-way interaction between partner likability, objective validity, and information direction was not significant (Table 7),  $F(1, 365) = 1.92$ ,  $p = .17$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .005$ , suggesting the objective validity information did not moderate how people selected enhancing versus diminishing information for partners that vary on likability.

**Factors Mediating Other-Enhancing Selection:** We also examined whether the same two factors—social considerations and instrumental considerations—as assessed in Experiment 3 mediated the impact of partner likability and enhancement bias. Using PROCESS 95% bias-corrected CI based on 5,000 bootstrapped samples, partner likability influenced the selection bias score through social considerations (Model 4, Hayes, 2012),  $ab = 0.24$ , 95% CI [0.05, 0.50]. However, as before, instrumental considerations did not mediate the effect of partner likability on enhancement bias,  $ab = -0.25$ , 95% CI [-0.54, 0.01]. These results consistently showed that participants' other-enhancing selections were closely related to their social considerations but not their desire to provide useful information to their partners.

In sum, Experiment 5a showed that even when objectively correct information was available for participants to choose, they were still more likely to choose the information that was helpful for enhancing others' self-view, even when it was inconsistent with the objective information of the test. Further, participants did this for likable others but not for dislikable others.

## Experiment 5b

### Method

**Participants:** We recruited 1,000 U.S. participants through Prolific Academic. We excluded participants who failed our memory check and attention check, leaving a final sample of 649 (326 women, 310 men, nine nonbinary, three prefer not to disclose;  $M_{\text{age}} = 41.93$ ,  $SD_{\text{age}} = 13.30$ ). Three hundred eighty-nine self-identify as White, 117 Black, 52 Hispanic, 61 Asian, nine Native American, and 21 other). It was preregistered at <https://aspredicted.org/5npj-qq3d.pdf>. A sensitivity power analysis showed that this sample size was sufficient to detect an interaction between information verification and partner's view of the test at an effect size as small as  $f = 0.06$  with 80% power.

**Design:** This study shared the exact same design as Experiment 5a but had been conducted to replicate the results of Experiment 5a with a larger sample.

### Results and Discussion

**Manipulation Check:** Partner likability was successfully manipulated, showing a significant main effect,  $F(1, 646) = 645.80$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .50$ . The likable partner ( $M = 6.44$ ,  $SD = 1.62$ ) was evaluated as more likable than the dislikable partner ( $M = 2.83$ ,  $SD = 1.96$ ).

**Information Selection:** First, replicating our previous results, participants selected more enhancing ( $M = 4.62$ ,  $SD = 2.81$ ) than diminishing information ( $M = 2.87$ ,  $SD = 2.98$ ) for the likable partner,  $F(1, 645) = 41.65$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .06$ . This time, however, for the dislikable partner, participants selected more diminishing ( $M = 4.13$ ,  $SD = 2.89$ ) than enhancing information ( $M = 3.22$ ,  $SD = 2.83$ ),  $F(1, 645) = 12.25$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .02$ . Accordingly, the interaction between information direction and partner likability was statistically significant (Figure 3),  $F(1, 645) = 50.14$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .07$ . Again, the differences across likability conditions were driven by selecting more enhancing information for the likable than the dislikable partner,  $F(1, 647) = 39.63$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .06$ , as well as more diminishing information for the dislikable than the likable partner,  $F(1, 647) = 29.07$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .04$ .

In addition, the two-way interaction between information direction and objective validity was also significant,  $F(1, 645) = 5.02$ ,  $p = .03$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .01$ . Providing the test's objective validity information did not change the amount of diminishing information participant selected ( $M = 3.66$ ,  $SD = 3.01$ ) compared with when the test's objective validity information was not provided ( $M = 3.35$ ,  $SD = 2.98$ ),  $F(1, 645) = 1.81$ ,  $p = .18$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .003$ . However, providing the test's objective validity information lowered the amount of enhancing information

( $M = 3.66$ ,  $SD = 2.98$ ) participants selected compared to when there was no validity information was provided ( $M = 4.19$ ,  $SD = 2.81$ ),  $F(1, 645) = 5.79$ ,  $p = .02$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .01$ . In other words, participants showed an enhancing bias when there was no objective information about the test validity,  $F(1, 645) = 9.75$ ,  $p = .002$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .02$ , but this bias disappeared when the objectively correct information about the test's validity was provided (which was inconsistent with the information that could help to enhance others),  $F(1, 645) = 5.79$ ,  $p = 1.00$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .001$ . These results suggest that participants are sensitive to the test's objective validity information. However, different from our prediction but consistent with the results from Experiment 5a, the overall three-way interaction was not significant (Table 8),  $F(1, 645) = 0.08$ ,  $p = .78$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .001$ , suggesting that the objective validity information about the test did not differentially influence the extent to which people enhanced likable versus dislikable others.

**Factors Mediating Other-Enhancing Selection:** We again examined whether the two factors—social considerations and instrumental considerations—measured like before mediated the impact of partner likability on the enhancement bias. Using PROCESS 95% bias-corrected CI based on 5,000 bootstrapped samples, partner likability influenced the selection bias score through social considerations (Model 4, Hayes, 2012),  $ab = 0.50$ , 95% CI [0.28, 0.75]. However, replicating previous results, the instrumental considerations did not mediate the effect of partner likability on the selection bias score,  $ab = -0.02$ , 95% CI [-0.17, 0.12].

## Experiment 6

Our previous experiments showed that people provide information to validate others' positive views about themselves. This tendency, which occurred when participants were instructed to select information in whatever way they wanted, was mediated by social considerations for others. However, what if another type of consideration became more salient? To examine the boundaries of selecting enhancing information for others, we manipulated the salience of instrumental considerations. The rationale was that instructing participants to consider the accuracy of the information would set limits on the goal of enhancing their partner.

## Method

**Participants:** We recruited 200 U.S. participants through Prolific Academic. We excluded participants who failed our attention check, leaving a final sample of 183 (93 women, 87 men, two nonbinary, one prefer not to disclose;  $M_{\text{age}} = 37.95$ ,  $SD_{\text{age}} = 13.50$ . One hundred twenty self-identify as White, 30 Black, 12 Hispanic, 15 Asian, one Native American, and five other). It was preregistered at <https://aspredicted.org/6qyr-7gxxg.pdf>. A sensitivity power analysis showed that this sample size was sufficient to detect an interaction between information direction and goal at an effect size as small as  $f = 0.10$  with 80% power.

**Design:** In this experiment, participants learned about a likable partner who performed poorly on an intelligence test. As in the objective validity conditions of Experiments 5a and 5b, participants learned that the test was objectively valid. In the control condition,

which had the same instructions as the previous experiments, participants were simply instructed to select information as they liked for their partner. In the accuracy goal condition, participants were encouraged to provide objective and accurate information to their partners. Specifically, participants read the following instruction:

We have found that the best method to assign articles is as if you were the HR staff in the workplace of the person receiving the feedback. HRs in companies usually provide objective evaluations of others through assessments and feedback. Objective evaluations are important because people need accurate information to appreciate their strengths and weaknesses, choose tasks wisely, and work to improve when they want. However, make any choice of feedback you want. It is completely up to you and there is no right or wrong way to assign readings.

## Results and Discussion

**Information Selection:** We conducted a 2 (goal: control, accuracy)  $\times$  2 (information direction: enhancing and diminishing) ANOVA with the first factor between-participants and the second factor within-participants (results are presented in Table 9 and Figure 4). As predicted, the overall two-way interaction was significant (Figure 4),  $F(1, 181) = 11.76$ ,  $p = .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .06$ . Specifically, when participants were simply asked to choose whatever they wanted for their partner (the control condition), they chose significantly more enhancing ( $M = 4.79$ ,  $SD = 2.50$ ) than diminishing information ( $M = 2.34$ ,  $SD = 2.63$ ),  $F(1, 181) = 25.79$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .13$ . In contrast, when participants were provided with an accuracy goal, they selected similar amounts of enhancing ( $M = 3.63$ ,  $SD = 2.72$ ) and diminishing information ( $M = 3.51$ ,  $SD = 2.93$ ),  $F(1, 181) = 0.07$ ,  $p = .79$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .001$ . These results thus suggested that an accuracy goal can override the tendency to provide enhancing information to others (Table 9), leading to them sharing a more balanced mix of information.

## General Discussion

Across seven experiments, we found that participants by default selected more information that could enhance likable others in both the personality and intelligence domains (Studies 1–3). These other-enhancing selections persisted even when the other person did not express self-enhancing views (Experiment 4) and when objective information was available (Experiments 5a and 5b). Importantly, we found that this other-enhancing information selection was mediated by people's social considerations to please others (Experiment 3 and Experiments 5a and 5b). Last, we found that the other-enhancing bias disappeared when the goal of providing accurate information was made salient (Experiment 6). These findings thus revealed a new phenomenon illustrating people's readiness to provide information that can help likable others to maintain a positive self-view (see Table 1 for a summary of all study variables and designs).

Our findings contribute to and go beyond the work on information selection and transmission for the self. Past work has mostly focused on investigating the behavioral patterns and the motives behind people's selectivity of attitudinal information *for the self* (e.g., Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Festinger, 1954; Hart et al., 2009; Olson & Stone, 2005). Thus, our work extends this past research to examine how people select information for



*other people*. Specifically, we found that when targets expressed positive views of the self, people were ready to select information that furthered the enhancement even in the presence of evidence that opposes the self-view. Notably, however, this happened for likable others but not dislikable ones.

This work also goes beyond the classic MUM effect (i.e., keeping mum about undesirable messages, Rosen & Tesser, 1970), which shows that people are less willing to deliver negative news to others. Specifically, our work investigated information selection after participants had already received information about their test performance. In addition, the MUM effect has emerged in face-to-face communication or organizational contexts where communicating negative news has implications for the relationship (e.g., Keil et al., 2007; Marler et al., 2012; Tesser et al., 1971, 1972; Yariv, 2006). In our research, however, participants had no meaningful interpersonal relationships with the recipient of information, and our findings go beyond selecting flattering information into investigating the motives driving the selection.

To our knowledge, this is the first set of studies that systematically investigated the possibility and preconditions of selecting information to enhance unknown others with whom people are unlikely to interact. Our work provided a stringent test of information selection in a context where motivations, such as impression management, relationship maintenance, and social norms are all minimized. With a paradigm that created an online anonymous environment where there is no preexisting relationship between the sender and receiver, people should be free from self-presentation motives and relatively unconcerned with the consequences of information sharing for the relationship. Yet, in most cases, people still choose to select more information that could help others to maintain a positive self-view. Even more critical, our work not only investigated the selection of information for others but also identified how the likability of the target influences selection decisions. Past work on interpersonal feedback has investigated people's tendency to provide positive feedback for others as a general phenomenon, suggesting that it is an effect that happens universally (i.e., for all targets). However, our work discovered that liking the recipient is crucial in determining the provider's selection behavior. People did not enhance others when the other person was dislikable, revealing a boundary condition where the general "positivity for others" rule was absent.

Self-verification is one of the main motives in selecting information for the self (e.g., Swann, 2012; Swann et al., 1989, 2003), meaning that people seek information that is consistent with their own self-views however, our results showed that participants who selected information for others did not simply go along with others' expressed views. Even when targets did not express a positive self-belief, those selecting information still preferred flattering information for others (Experiment 4). This finding suggests that selecting information for others may follow different principles than selecting for the self, where seeking consistent information with one's self-views carries the day. Although we acknowledge that some may also consider verifying others' views as a subtle form of "enhancement" in which one confirms others' accuracy, we defined enhancement as away of improving others' positive self-views, which is also consistent with the distinction between self-enhancement and self-verification in the extant literature (cf, Baumeister, 1982;

Sedikides, 1993). The results showed that instead of going along with confirming others' accuracy, people were much more likely to select information that can help to sustain others' positive self-views with respect to general traits such as being intelligent.

Some people may argue that the self-verification manipulation in Experiment 4 could have elicited pity from people who are subsequently going to select information for them. In that case, partners who indicated that they do not consider themselves smart might make others feel bad for them, thus encouraging the selection of information to boost the partner's self-view. We think this could very likely be part of the reason why participants were not affected by this kind of self-expressed view but were only impacted by self-enhancing ones. That is, people may not want to endorse others' derogatory self-views even when these views may be accurate.

Our work further demonstrated that people's motivation to enhance others is quite strong, manifesting in the finding that even when the objectively accurate information was presented, people continued to select more enhancing than objectively accurate information (Experiment 5a and 5b). It was only when an accuracy goal was made explicitly salient that the tendency to enhance others decreased (Experiment 6). These findings showed a strong force acting from outside of the self to bolster a positive self-view, which could serve as a new way through which people can maintain a positive illusion about the self even when objective evidence suggests otherwise. Moreover, people themselves do not even need to be proactive at self-enhancing, as shown by prior work (Baumeister, 1982; Blaine & Crocker, 1993). Total strangers can serve as a powerful source to build others up by selectively providing positive albeit inaccurate information that bolsters others' positive self-view. This mechanism could have important implications for explaining how people can overconfidently see themselves as above average on many dimensions and suggests powerful barriers to offering realistic information in educational and work settings. One aspect to consider is that the objective validity manipulation in Experiments 5a and 5b may have been weakened by the invalid feedback that contradicted it. That is, participants who were told that the test was valid might have doubted its validity when exposed to the invalid feedback option. However, the manipulation of objective validity was effective, as judged by the finding that participants selected similar amounts of enhancing and diminishing information when the test had been introduced as valid. In the future, researchers might investigate other possible manipulations of objective validity to determine if different forms of manipulation of objective validity produce different results.

Enhancing information selection for others aligns with work on prosocial behaviors showing that people are willing to act in ways that benefit others. It is worth noting that there was no public audience in our studies. Participants were not asked to make decisions in the presence of others. Although impression management is one of the major factors that influence people's selective behaviors (Prislin & Wood, 2005; Schlenker, 1980), we do not think it was a significant factor in our paradigm, because participants were not risking their reputations in this anonymous setting. Rather, people voluntarily decided what information could help others maintain a positive self-view.

One reason people might be particularly attuned to others' desire in these studies is that people recognize the importance of the two dimensions—personality and intelligence—for the self. As personality and intelligence are two central domains for person judgments, people might be especially motivated to help others sustain a positive self-view in areas they consider critical. Future research should examine whether people enhance others in domains that are less significant. For example, what if people do poorly on a coloring task and express disapproval of the task design? Would witnesses select information that confirms their views of the task, thus enhancing others' self-views about their ability to fill in colors? When the significance of the evaluative domain is low, people might not feel it necessary to enhance others by selecting flattering and unrealistic information (See Table 10 for additional limitations and future directions).

Last but not least, although we eliminated the selection of other-enhancing information for a likable person by highlighting the goal to provide accurate and helpful information to others in Experiment 6, the accuracy motivation manipulation did not lead to selecting more diminishing information but rather to sharing a balance of enhancing and diminishing information. Moreover, the selection of more other-enhancing information only occurred for likable others. One possibility behind this effect is that an automatic and strong affiliative goal is activated when interacting with a likable (vs. a dislikable) person (Sinclair et al., 2005), making people sensitive to the target's goals and leading to behaviors that pave the road for future relationships. Alternatively, when encountering a dislikable person, an affiliative goal might unlikely to be activated, reducing the tendency to gauge the target's goals and promoting other motives. Future work should disentangle these different possibilities for dislikable others.

## Supplementary Material

Refer to Web version on PubMed Central for supplementary material.

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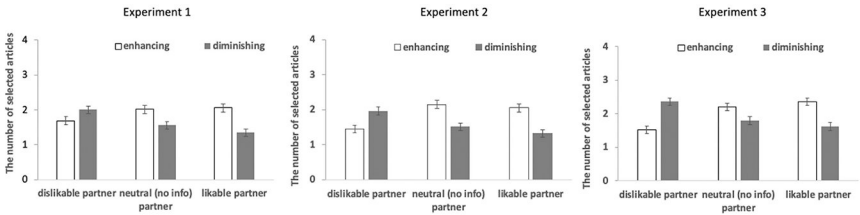
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### Statement of Limitations

This work found that people selectively provide self-relevant information to others, in particular, likable and neutral others, to enhance others' self-views. The studies were conducted with an online paradigm and included participants from the United States, thus addressing a limited set of different cultures and settings. Although we tried to generalize our findings by testing different content and goals, more exploration is necessary to examine the generalizability and boundary conditions of our findings. For example, future research could explore domains other than personality and intelligence, manipulate the valence of the expressed self-views in different ways, and change the settings in which self-views are tested.

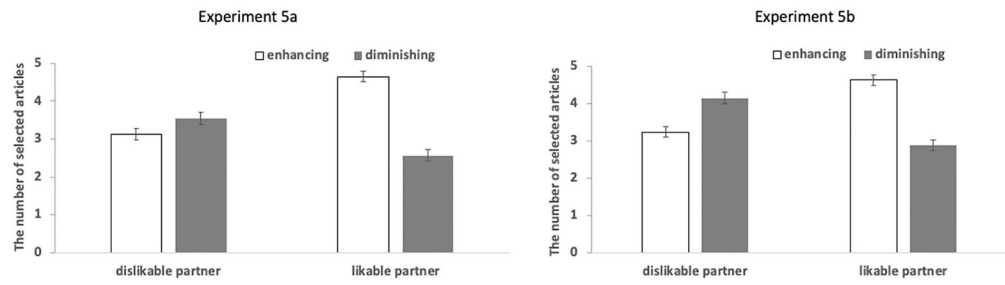


**Figure 1. Article Selection by Information Direction and Partner Likability (Experiment 1)**  
*Note.* Error bars are standard errors.



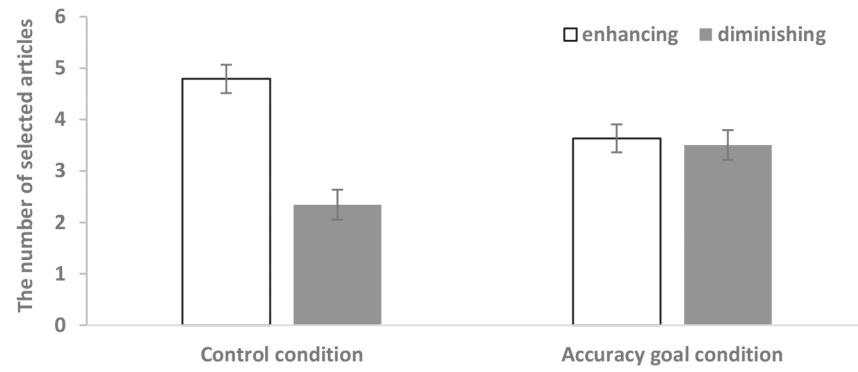
**Figure 2. Article Selection by Information Direction and Partner's Expressed View (Experiment 4)**

*Note.* Error bars are standard errors.



**Figure 3. Article Selection by Information Direction and Partner Likability (Experiment 5a and 5b)**

*Note.* Error bars are standard errors.



**Figure 4. Article Selection by Goal and Information Direction (Experiment 6)**

*Note.* Error bars are standard errors.



Table 1

Summary of Variables in All Studies

Study	Variable	Description	Design
Studies 1, 2, and 3	Partner likability (likable, neutral, or dislikable)	Whether the partner conveyed socially appropriate information, no information, or offensive information	Between-participants
	Partner's performance and view of the test (perform well and think the test is valid, or perform poorly and think the test is invalid)	Whether the partner performed well or poorly on the test and their corresponding self-enhancing view of the test	Between-participants
	Information direction (enhancing or diminishing)	Whether the selected information helps to enhance the partner's self-view or not	Within-participants
Study 4 (likable partner only)	Partner's view of the test (self-enhancing or self-diminishing)	Whether the partner expressed a self-enhancing view (thinks the test is valid when they perform well or think the test is invalid when they perform poorly) or not (thinks the test is invalid when they perform well or thinks the test is valid when they perform poorly)	Within-participants
	Information congeniality (verifying or unverifyng)	Whether the selected information is consistent with their partner's expressed self-view	Between-participants
Studies 5a and 5b (poor performance on the test only)	Partner likability (likable or dislikable)	Whether the partner conveys socially appropriate information, no information, or offensive information	Between-participants
	Test's objective validity of the test (no information or valid)	Whether the test's objective validity if not described or it is described as objectively valid	Between-participants
	Information direction (enhancing or diminishing)	Whether the selected information helps to enhance the partner's self-view or not	Within-participants
Study 6 (likable partner performed poorly on the test that is objectively valid)	Goal (control or accuracy)	Whether participants are encouraged to select whatever information they like or objective and accurate information	Between-participants
	Information direction (enhancing or diminishing)	Whether the selected information helps to enhance their partner's self-view or not	Within-participants

Table 2

Means, Standard Deviations, and F Ratios for Experiment 1

Condition	Statistic			
	M number of selected article			Contrasts enhancing versus diminishing
	Dislikable partner	Neutral partner	Likable partner	
Partner did poorly and thinks the test was invalid				-0.02 (0.15) 95% CI [-0.31, 0.27]
Enhancing	1.54 (1.59)	1.87 (1.38)	1.88 (1.42)	
Diminishing	2.26 (1.53)	1.81 (1.46)	1.28 (1.35)	
Partner did well and thinks the test was valid				0.58 (0.15) 95% CI [0.30, 0.87]***
Enhancing	1.84 (1.50)	2.15 (1.38)	2.22 (1.40)	
Diminishing	1.74 (1.50)	1.32 (1.34)	1.41 (1.24)	
Contrasts for partner likability (SE)				
Enhancing versus diminishing	-0.31 (0.19) 95% CI [-0.68, 0.05]	0.45 (0.18)* 95% CI [-0.10, 0.79]	0.71 (0.18)*** 95% CI [-0.35, 1.06]	
Main effects and interactions				
Main effect: information direction $F(1, 497)$	$7.26 \eta_p^2 = .01^{**}$			
Main effect: partner likability $F(2, 497)$	$1.29 \eta_p^2 = .005$			
Main effect: partner performance $F(1, 497)$	$0.02 \eta_p^2 < .000$			
Interaction: Selected Information $\times$ Partner Likability $F(2, 497)$	$8.37 \eta_p^2 = .03^{***}$			
Interaction: Information Direction $\times$ Performance $F(1, 497)$	$8.35 \eta_p^2 = .02^{**}$			
Interaction: Partner Likability $\times$ Performance $F(2, 497)$	$2.28 \eta_p^2 = .01$			
Interaction: Information Direction $\times$ Partner Likability $\times$ Performance $F(2, 497)$	$0.90 \eta_p^2 = .004$			

Note. The  $F$  statistics are reported for each of the main effects and interactions with effect sizes ( $\eta_p^2$ ) included in parenthesis. Asterisks represent the significance of the contrasts.  $SE$  = standard error; CI = confidence interval.

\*  
 $p < .05$ .

\*\*  
 $p < .01$ .

\*\*\*  
 $p < .001$ .

Table 3

Means, Standard Deviations, and F Ratios for Experiment 2

Condition	Statistic			
	M number of selected article			Contrasts enhancing versus diminishing
	Dislikable partner	Neutral partner	Likable partner	
Partner did poorly and thinks the test was invalid				-0.07 (0.15) 95% CI [-0.36, 0.22]
Enhancing	1.34 (1.52)	1.94 (1.47)	1.95 (1.49)	
Diminishing	2.25 (1.60)	1.87 (1.57)	1.33 (1.50)	
Partner did well and thinks the test was valid				0.64 (0.15) 95% CI [0.34, 0.94] ***
Enhancing	1.56 (1.40)	2.37 (1.47)	2.15 (1.40)	
Diminishing	1.67 (1.46)	1.16 (1.26)	1.33 (1.27)	
Contrasts for partner likability (SE)				
Enhancing versus diminishing	-0.51 (0.19) ** 95% CI [-0.88, -0.14]	0.64 (0.18) *** 95% CI [0.29, 0.99]	0.73 (0.18) *** 95% CI [0.37, 1.08]	
Main effects and interactions				
Main effect: selected information $H(1, 524)$	7.33 $\eta_p^2 = .01$ **			
Main effect: partner likability $H(2, 524)$	1.77 $\eta_p^2 = .007$			
Main effect: partner performance $H(1, 524)$	1.13 $\eta_p^2 = .002$			
Interaction: Selected Information $\times$ Partner Likability $H(2, 524)$	13.84 $\eta_p^2 = .05$ ***			
Interaction: Selected Information $\times$ Performance $H(1, 524)$	11.37 $\eta_p^2 = .02$ ***			
Interaction: Partner Likability $\times$ Performance $H(2, 524)$	1.56 $\eta_p^2 = .006$			
Interaction: Selected Information $\times$ Partner Likability $\times$ Performance $H(2, 524)$	1.74 $\eta_p^2 = .007$			

Note. The  $F$  statistics are reported for each of the main effects and interactions with effect sizes ( $\eta_p^2$ ) included in parenthesis. Asterisks represent the significance of the contrasts.  $SE$  = standard error; CI = confidence interval.

\*\*  
 $p < .01$ .

\*\*\*  
 $p < .001$ .

Table 4

Means, Standard Deviations, and F Ratios for Experiment 3

Condition	Statistic			
	M number of selected article			Contrasts enhancing versus diminishing
	Dislikable partner	Neutral partner	Likable partner	
Partner did poorly and thinks the test was invalid				-0.03 (0.15) 95% CI [-0.34, 0.27]
Enhancing	1.39 (1.46)	2.13 (1.61)	2.34 (1.49)	
Diminishing	2.49 (1.53)	1.91 (1.65)	1.56 (1.57)	
Partner did well and thinks the test was valid				0.23 (0.16) 95% CI [-0.08, 0.54]
Enhancing	1.66 (1.60)	2.27 (1.44)	2.36 (1.36)	
Diminishing	2.23 (1.58)	1.69 (1.37)	1.68 (1.40)	
Contrasts for partner likability (SE)				
Enhancing versus diminishing	-0.84 (0.19) 95% CI [-1.21, -0.46]	0.73 (0.19) 95% CI [0.37, 1.10]	0.40 (0.19) 95% CI [0.03, 0.78]	
Main effects and interactions				
Main effect: selected information $H(1, 529)$	$0.81 \eta_p^2 = .002$			
Main effect: partner likability $H(2, 524)$	$0.22 \eta_p^2 = .001$			
Main effect: partner performance $H(1, 524)$	$0.22 \eta_p^2 < .001$			
Interaction: Selected Information × Partner Likability $H(2, 529)$	$18.81 \eta_p^2 = .07^{***}$			
Interaction: Selected Information × Performance $H(1, 529)$	$1.45 \eta_p^2 = .003$			
Interaction: Partner Likability × Performance $H(2, 529)$	$0.21 \eta_p^2 = .001$			
Interaction: Selected Information × Partner Likability × Performance $H(2, 529)$	$0.74 \eta_p^2 = .003$			

Note. The  $F$  statistics are reported for each of the main effects and interactions with effect sizes ( $\eta_p^2$ ) included in parenthesis. Asterisks represent the significance of the contrasts.  $SE$  = standard error;  $CI$  = confidence interval.

\*\*\*  
 $p < .001$ .

**Table 5**  
Results of Exploratory Factor Analysis of Measures of Social and Instrumental Considerations: Experiment 3

Item no.	Item	Factor		Communality
		Social	Instrumental	
1	To make a good impression on my partner	<b>.85</b>	<b>.13</b>	.75
2	To avoid being disliked by my partner	<b>.85</b>	<b>-.06</b>	.72
3	To make my partner feel good	<b>.84</b>	<b>-.06</b>	.70
4	To avoid hurting my partner's feelings	<b>.83</b>	<b>-.05</b>	.71
5	To avoid disagreeing with my partner	<b>.83</b>	<b>-.12</b>	.70
6	To feel like I am a good person	<b>.77</b>	<b>.18</b>	.62
7	To trust my partner's judgment about the test	<b>.66</b>	.26	.51
8	To meet the expectation of the researchers (did not include)	.45	.40	.36
9	To provide truthful feedback	-.05	<b>.86</b>	.74
10	To choose the information that would be most helpful for my partner	.07	<b>.79</b>	.63
11	To be objective	-.04	<b>.75</b>	.57

*Note.* Factor loadings are in boldface. Extraction method: Principle components. Rotation method: Varimax.

Table 6

Means, Standard Deviations, and F Ratios for Experiment 4

Condition	Statistic		Contrasts enhancing versus diminishing
	M	number of selected article	
Partner expressed self-enhancing view			0.95 (0.19) 95% CI [0.59, 1.32] ***
Enhancing	2.42 (1.38)	2.13 (1.61)	
Diminishing	1.47 (1.51)	1.91 (1.65)	
Partner did not express self-enhancing view			1.30 (0.20) 95% CI [0.91, 1.69] ***
Enhancing	2.60 (1.48)	2.27 (1.44)	
Diminishing	1.30 (1.46)	1.69 (1.37)	
Main effects and interactions			
Main effect: selected information $F(1, 346)$	$69.05 \eta_p^2 = .17^{***}$		
Main effect: self-view $F(1, 346)$	$0.98 \eta_p^2 < .001$		
Interaction: Selected Information $\times$ Self-View $F(1, 346)$	$1.62 \eta_p^2 = .005$		

Note. The  $F$  statistics are reported for each of the main effects and interactions with effect sizes ( $\eta_p^2$ ) included in parenthesis. Asterisks represent the significance of the contrasts. CI = confidence interval.  
\*\*\*  
 $p < .001$ .

Table 7

Means, Standard Deviations, and F Ratios for Experiment 5a

Condition	Statistic		
	M number of selected article		
	Dislikable partner	Likable partner	Contrasts enhancing versus diminishing
Test's objective validity_no information			1.88 (0.35) 95% CI [1.18, 2.57] ***
Enhancing	3.68 (2.99)	4.83 (2.70)	
Diminishing	2.70 (2.95)	2.05 (2.73)	
Test's objective validity_valid			-0.21 (0.35) 95% CI [-0.91, 0.49]
Enhancing	2.58 (2.77)	4.47 (2.63)	
Diminishing	4.38 (3.08)	3.08 (3.05)	
Contrasts for partner likability (SE)			
Enhancing versus diminishing	-0.41 (0.35) 95% CI [-1.10, 0.27]	2.08 (0.36) *** 95% CI [1.38, 2.79]	
Main effects and interactions			
Main effect: selected information $F(1, 365)$	11.14 $\eta_p^2 = .03$ ***		
Main effect: partner likability $F(1, 265)$	2.75 $\eta_p^2 = .01$		
Main effect: test objective validity $F(1, 365)$	3.57 $\eta_p^2 = .01$		
Interaction: Selected Information $\times$ Partner Likability $F(1, 365)$	24.90 $\eta_p^2 = .06$ ***		
Interaction: Selected Information $\times$ Test Objective Validity $F(1, 365)$	17.42 $\eta_p^2 = .05$ ***		
Interaction: Selected Information $\times$ Partner Likability $\times$ Performance $F(1, 365)$	1.92 $\eta_p^2 = .005$		

Note. The  $F$  statistics are reported for each of the main effects and interactions with effect sizes ( $\eta_p^2$ ) included in parenthesis. Asterisks represent the significance of the contrasts.  $SE$  = standard error; CI = confidence interval.

\*\*\*  
 $p < .001$ .



Table 8

Means, Standard Deviations, and F Ratios for Experiment 5b

	Statistic		
	M number of selected article		
Condition	Dislikable partner (SD)	Likable partner (SD)	Contrasts (SE) enhancing versus diminishing
Test's objective validity_no information			0.53 (0.22) 95% CI [0.10, 0.97] *
Enhancing	3.65 (2.79)	4.72 (2.73)	
Diminishing	4.20 (2.95)	2.50 (2.76)	
Test's objective validity_valid			-0.31 (0.23) 95% CI [-0.76, 0.14]
Enhancing	2.79 (2.82)	4.52 (2.88)	
Diminishing	4.07 (2.84)	3.25 (3.13)	
Contrasts for partner likability (SE)			
Enhancing versus diminishing	-0.91 (0.26) 95% CI [-1.42, -0.40] ***	1.75 (0.27) *** 95% CI [1.22, 2.28]	
Main effects and interactions			
Main effect: selected information $F(1, 645)$	5.01 $\eta_p^2 = .01$ *		
Main effect: partner likability $F(1, 645)$	0.30 $\eta_p^2 < .001$		
Main effect: test objective validity $F(1, 645)$	0.79 $\eta_p^2 = .001$		
Interaction: Selected Information $\times$ Partner Likability $F(1, 365)$	50.14 $\eta_p^2 = .07$ ***		
Interaction: Selected Information $\times$ Test Objective Validity $F(1, 365)$	5.02 $\eta_p^2 = .01$ *		
Interaction: Selected Information $\times$ Partner Likability $\times$ Performance $F(1, 365)$	0.08 $\eta_p^2 = .001$		

Note. The  $F$  statistics are reported for each of the main effects and interactions with effect sizes ( $\eta_p^2$ ) included in parenthesis. Asterisks represent the significance of the contrasts,  $SE$  = standard error; CI = confidence interval.

\*  $p < .05$ .

\*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

Table 9

Means, Standard Deviations, and F Ratios for Experiment 6

Condition	Statistic	
	<i>M</i> number of selected article	Contrasts ( <i>SE</i> ) enhancing versus diminishing
Control (no goal)		2.44 (0.48) 95% CI [1.50, 3.39]*
Enhancing	4.79 (2.50)	
Diminishing	2.34 (2.63)	
Accuracy goal		0.13 (0.47) 95% CI [−0.81, 1.06]
Enhancing	3.63 (2.72)	
Diminishing	3.51 (2.93)	
Main effects and interactions		
Main effect: selected information <i>F</i> (1, 181)	14.53 $\eta_p^2 = .07^{***}$	
Main effect: goal <i>F</i> (1, 181)	0.001 $\eta_p^2 < .001$	
Interaction: Selected Information × Goal <i>F</i> (1, 365)	11.76 $\eta_p^2 = .06^{**}$	

Note. *SE* = standard error; CI = confidence interval.

Table 10

Potential Limitations and Future Directions

Limitation	Explanation of potential limitation	Opportunity for future research
Situational generalizability	Experiments were conducted online, a setting that chosen to provide a conservative test of our research question given the distance between participants and their partners. However, the interpersonal dynamic might be different in in-person settings, where participants could be under the influence of more normative social rules regarding interpersonal interactions.	Explore the occurrence of other-enhancing behaviors in in-person settings.
Cross-cultural generalizability	Participants were from the United States. There might be cultural differences in the extent to which people provide other-enhancing support.	Explore cultural differences in the extent and the way of providing other-enhancing information.
Domain Specificity	Our experiments examined other-enhancing behaviors in the domain of personality and intelligence. However, a person's self-view includes other dimensions. Whether and how much people exhibit other-enhancing behaviors might depend on the specific domain.	Explore whether and how much people exhibit other-enhancing behaviors across different domains of the self.
Expression of self-views	We included studies where the target expressed negative self-verification views (i.e., "I have never felt smart") to rule out the possibility that participants were simply selecting information to cater to others' self-expressed views. However, we did not manipulate the degree of valence of the self-verification views. For example, people could express self-verification views in a less negative tone (e.g., "I don't necessarily feel I'm smart"), which may influence people's other-enhancing behaviors.	Manipulate the valence of self-expressed views and examine its impact on eliciting other-enhancing behaviors.
Manipulation specificity	The current work manipulated partner likability, which was associated with varying strength of affiliative goals. Yet there could be different way of manipulating affiliative goals, including varying the possibility of further interactions with their partner.	Using different manipulations to examine the role of affiliative goals in influencing other-enhancing behaviors.
Setting generalizability	The current work used a paradigm where self-views were expressed after ostensibly receiving test results. However, the setting in which people need to enhance their self-views might differ, which may, in turn, influence participants' other-enhancing behaviors.	Test the generalizability of the behavior under different social settings by exploring different other-enhancing settings such as receiving a review from an employer or a teacher.