



## Seeing Oneself as a Valued Contributor: Social Worth Affirmation Improves Team Information Sharing

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Abstract:	Teams often fail to reach their potential because members' concerns about being socially accepted prevent them from offering their unique perspectives to the team. Drawing on relational self and self-affirmation theory, we argue that affirmation of team members' social worth by trusted people outside the team helps them internalize an identity as a valued contributor, thereby reducing social acceptance concerns and facilitating information sharing in teams. We devised three intervention studies to demonstrate the causal effect of social worth affirmation in teams. In Study 1, senior executive teams in which members experienced social worth affirmation performed better on a crisis simulation that required information sharing in teams (compared to control teams). In Study 2, with U.S. military cadets, we examined social acceptance concerns as a mechanism by which social worth affirmation influences information sharing. In Study 3, we showed that social worth affirmation improves virtual teams' ability to share information by exchanging unique information cues. Our results suggest that affirmation of the social worth of team members through their personal relationships broadens their sense of self, thereby reducing their social concerns about being accepted by other members. This, in turn, leads to better information sharing in teams.

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## Seeing Oneself as a Valued Contributor: Social Worth Affirmation Improves Team Information Sharing

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3 **SEEING ONESELF AS A VALUED CONTRIBUTOR:**  
4 **SOCIAL WORTH AFFIRMATION IMPROVES TEAM INFORMATION SHARING**  
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6 **ABSTRACT**  
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8 Teams often fail to reach their potential because members' concerns about being socially  
9 accepted prevent them from offering their unique perspectives to the team. Drawing on relational  
10 self and self-affirmation theory, we argue that affirmation of team members' social worth by  
11 trusted people outside the team helps them internalize an identity as a valued contributor, thereby  
12 reducing social acceptance concerns and facilitating information sharing in teams. We devised  
13 three intervention studies to demonstrate the causal effect of social worth affirmation in teams. In  
14 Study 1, senior executive teams in which members experienced social worth affirmation  
15 performed better on a crisis simulation that required information sharing in teams (compared to  
16 control teams). In Study 2, with U.S. military cadets, we examined social acceptance concerns as  
17 a mechanism by which social worth affirmation influences information sharing. In Study 3, we  
18 showed that social worth affirmation improves virtual teams' ability to share information by  
19 exchanging unique information cues. Our results suggest that affirmation of the social worth of  
20 team members through their personal relationships broadens their sense of self, thereby reducing  
21 their social concerns about being accepted by other members. This, in turn, leads to better  
22 information sharing in teams.  
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26 *Keywords:* social worth affirmation; relational identity; self-affirmation; information sharing in  
27 teams; concerns about social acceptance.  
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30 A team's ability to encourage members to share unique information with each other is  
31 key to good decision making and optimal team performance. Unfortunately, when team members  
32 are first introduced to each other, their need to feel accepted by the others can impede effective  
33 team communication (Wittenbaum & Stasser, 1996; Gruenfeld et al., 1996). Concerns about  
34 social acceptance can lead members to prioritize fitting in over contributing unique information.  
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36 The result is that teams are biased toward repeating information shared by team members,  
37 because it helps members appear "cognitively central and thus task competent" (Wittenbaum,  
38 Hubbell & Zuckerman, 1999; p. 968). Thus, team members' concerns about social acceptance  
39 can impair a team's ability to achieve optimal outcomes.  
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51 Past research on team information sharing has addressed this problem by highlighting the  
52 value of increasing the team's knowledge of its members' differences in ideas, background, and  
53 perspectives. As evidenced in a qualitative study of diverse teams by Ely and Thomas (2001),  
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3 openly discussing the unique qualities of different team members allowed individuals to feel  
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5 valued and respected. The team members were able to apply their differences in knowledge and  
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7 the perspectives associated with their unique identities, which enhanced the team's cross-cultural  
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9 learning and performance. The self-verification literature offers a similar message: the more that  
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11 team members feel that the others' appraisals are in line with their own self-views (Swann et al.,  
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13 2004), the more that diverse teams achieve high levels of creative performance (Polzer, Milton,  
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15 & Swann, 2002; Swann et al., 2003).  
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19           As the increasing pace of change pressures organizations to rely on adaptable teams  
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21 (Hackman & Wageman, 2004; Mortensen & Haas, 2018; Valentine & Edmondson, 2014), it can  
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23 be difficult for modern teams to invest the time and effort necessary to fully understand each  
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25 member's perspectives. Employees are pulled into multiple, fluid teams in their workplace  
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27 without an opportunity to develop a stable team identity. And, long-term project teams with  
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29 stable membership still may develop a culture or a norm that discourages individual members  
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31 from sharing valuable information. This presents an important challenge: how to optimize teams  
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33 such that they can access the knowledge and expertise that each team member brings to the  
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35 table? How can organizations prepare team members to be valued contributors before they even  
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37 start working together?  
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42           We posit that there is an untapped resource in each team member's social network of  
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44 close relationships (e.g., friends, family, and colleagues). We introduce the concept of *social*  
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46 *worth affirmation*, which we define as affirming people's need to feel socially valued through  
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48 close relationships, such that they see themselves as valued contributors. We propose that prior  
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50 to team entry, each team member can reach out to his or her personal network to gather their  
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52 memories about times that the focal individual made a positive social contribution (Roberts et al.,  
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3 2005a; Slotter & Gardner, 2014). Receiving narratives about personal contributions from a  
4 trusted network reveals *reflected* self-views (James, 1890; Cooley, 1902; Mead, 1934) that may  
5 not have previously been core to a person's self-views, and might not have been applied in a  
6 work team context. Internalizing an identity as a valued contributor reduces social acceptance  
7 concerns and prepares team members to bring unique value to a team. Thus, social worth  
8 affirmation from trusted people *outside* the team can broaden a member's sense of self *within* the  
9 team, thereby helping transcend concerns about social acceptance and facilitating team  
10 information sharing.  
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21           Our research offers key contributions to theories of relational self and self-affirmation.  
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23 First, we contribute research on intragroup processes by theorizing about the mechanism through  
24 which *social worth affirmation* results in higher levels of information sharing in teams. In doing  
25 so, we contribute to the literature on relational self by highlighting the role of relational identity  
26 as a valued contributor (Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Sluss & Ashforth, 2007). As such, we answer  
27 the request of scholars who have called for identifying micro-level factors that improve a team's  
28 capability to effectively share unique information (Sohrab, Waller & Kaplan, 2015). In addition  
29 to highlighting the practical importance of getting new teams up to speed quickly, our research  
30 applies a relational lens to a well-known problem: how concerns about social acceptance hinder  
31 team information sharing. We theorize how affirmation of one's identity as a valued contributor  
32 can reduce social acceptance concerns and prepare members to contribute to teams, thereby  
33 facilitating team information-sharing and performance. Thus, we propose a novel theoretical  
34 model that links team members' relational resources to the team's outcomes.  
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50           Second, we extend the self-affirmation literature by applying a relational lens. Most past  
51 self-affirmation research has asked individuals to reflect on their *own* view of the self (i.e.,  
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3 values and strengths that matter most to them) in order to motivate improved behavior (Cable,  
4 Gino & Staats, 2013; Cohen & Sherman, 2014). We propose that a team member's self-view can  
5 be expanded by considering external perspectives, beyond self-reflections. Our research on  
6 *social worth affirmation* explicates and demonstrates the value of "relational resources" (Roberts  
7 et al., 2005a) enabled by reaching out for affirming narratives from one's social network. As  
8 such, we show how a team member's pre-existing, non-team relationships can improve his or her  
9 psychological and motivational states within the team, thus improving how the team works. This  
10 important topic expands the intragroup process literature.

## 21 **SOCIAL WORTH AFFIRMATION, SOCIAL ACCEPTANCE CONCERNS, AND** 22 **INFORMATION SHARING IN TEAMS**

### 23 **Social Acceptance Concerns in Teams**

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25 In the early stage of team formation, it is likely for members to worry that the others may  
26 not accept them based on first impressions. Defined as the generalized social anxiety that arises  
27 from uncertainty about one's belonging and acceptance in a group (e.g., Leary et al., 1995; Leary  
28 et al., 1998), social acceptance concerns are common in new team contexts because these teams  
29 often cannot afford to take time to develop a collective identity based on their team membership  
30 (e.g., Mortensen & Haas, 2018). Thus, a team may not offer sufficient opportunities for  
31 individuals to get past their initial social acceptance concerns, precluding the team's full  
32 potential because members withhold their unique perspectives. Instead of addressing this  
33 problem by seeking to change team enculturation, we submit that team members may be able to  
34 draw from their *own* social network—external to their team—to remind themselves of their  
35 relational resources and identities. Thus, *social worth affirmation*, the affirmation of one's need  
36 to feel socially valued through close relationships, can improve team communication by reducing  
37 members' social acceptance concerns.

### Seeing Oneself as a Valued Contributor

Conceptually, people's relational context has a significant influence on how they define who they are (e.g., Cooley, 1902; Ely, 1994; Mead, 1934). From this perspective, one's sense of self is largely constructed through social interactions with close relationships. Our meta-perceptions of how others view us become automatically integrated and assimilated into our self-concept (Chen, Boucher, & Tapias, 2006; Cooley, 1902; Higgins & Pittman, 2008). Following this sociological tradition, we draw from the theory of relational self (Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Sluss & Ashforth, 2007) to conceptualize how an individual's close, personal relationships can serve as an untapped relational resource in reducing social acceptance concerns.

In developing a theoretical model in which concerns about social acceptance can be obviated, we also draw from self-affirmation theory. Self-affirmation is an approach that reminds people of their psychosocial resources—social relationships, core values, and cherished personal characteristics—in order to demonstrate their adequacy (Cohen & Sherman, 2014; Sherman & Cohen, 2006; Sherman & Hartson, 2011; Steele, 1988). This theory is predicated on the assumption that people are motivated to maintain a sense of self-worth by seeing themselves as moral, competent, and worthy individuals (Steele, 1988). We add to self-affirmation theory by highlighting a relational aspect of self-worth: individuals gain self-worth when they are socially valued, because pursuit of social worth is a basic human motivation (McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1992; Ryan & Deci, 2000). When individuals experience social worth, they feel needed, cared about, and valued by others, all feelings that signal the presence of an interpersonal bond or positive relationship (Bakan, 1966; Wrzesniewski, Dutton & Debebe, 2003). Specifically, the feeling of social worth lets people know that their actions matter in the lives of others (Elliott, Colangelo & Gelles, 2005; Rosenberg & McCullough, 1981). For this reason, theorists have

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3 argued that socially validating one's strengths and positive contributions enhances feelings of  
4 self-worth (e.g., Allport, 1961; Becker, 1962; Mead, 1964).  
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8         When a person learns from trusted others the specific ways he or she has made a positive  
9 impact, two processes of broadening one's identity may occur. On the one hand, social worth  
10 affirmation expands one's identity by highlighting and strengthening the person's pre-existing  
11 identity as a valued contributor, which has not been made salient or applied to the group context.  
12 On the other hand, social worth affirmation also provides an opportunity to bring in novel,  
13 reflected self-views from trusted others, such that the new identity as a valued contributor is  
14 added to one's repertoire of positive identities (Dutton, Roberts, & Bednar, 2010; Roberts et al.,  
15 2005a; Sluss & Ashforth, 2007). Consistent with Sluss and Ashforth (2007), who considered a  
16 process of relational identification as an *extension of self*, as an individual "broadens his or her  
17 repertoire of identities to include the relationship" (p. 15; also see Aron & Aron, 2000; Aron &  
18 McLaughlin-Volpe, 2001), social worth affirmation can contribute to broadening one's working  
19 definition of self to include making a positive contribution to others. This is in contrast to seeing  
20 oneself in a narrowly-defined social role and having self-worth that is contingent on appraisal  
21 from that specific context (Crocker & Knight, 2005). Social worth affirmation thus allows  
22 individuals to see themselves as an exemplar of the relational identity granted by their close  
23 relationships both in their past and in their future.  
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44         We theorize that this relational identity will help individuals transcend the social  
45 acceptance concerns they experience when entering a new team. Conceptually, a heightened  
46 sense of agency (highlighting one's self as a valued contributor) should serve as a psychological  
47 buffer, thereby reducing concerns about fitting in. As noted by Roberts et al. (2005a, p. 720),  
48 socially embedded resources can enable individuals to "counteract the effects of inhibitory  
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3 factors (such as threat, fear, or cynicism).” We thus predict that social worth affirmation from  
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5 close relationships enables individuals to transcend their concerns about social acceptance.  
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8 *Hypothesis 1. Social worth affirmation from close relationships reduces one’s concerns*  
9 *about social acceptance.*

## 11 **Social Worth Affirmation, Social Acceptance Concerns, and Information Sharing in Teams**

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13 Past research has treated information exchange as a key process by which teams ensure  
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15 that they function optimally while preventing productivity loss (e.g., McGrath & Argote, 2001;  
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17 Tannenbaum, Beard & Salas, 1992). There is ample evidence pointing to the positive  
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19 relationship between a team’s ability to exchange information and its performance (for a meta-  
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21 analysis, see Mesmer-Magnus & DeChurch, 2009). For instance, Stout et al. (1999) found that  
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23 better coordination in teams led to greater information sharing, resulting in better performance on  
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25 a simulation task. Similarly, open communication predicted better team performance (Barry &  
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27 Stewart, 1997; Hyatt & Ruddy, 1997), and effective information sharing improved group  
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29 performance (Jehn & Shah, 1997), in part through the information-seeking behaviors of the team  
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31 members (Durham et al., 2000). This line of research suggests that a team’s ability to tap into  
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33 each member’s unique knowledge is critical to the team’s performance.  
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39 Unfortunately, a team member’s willingness to contribute his or her unique information  
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41 is often overshadowed by the desire to fit in, belong, and conform to others’ expectations. To the  
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43 extent that individuals worry about fitting in, they become reluctant to share unique knowledge  
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45 that may be inconsistent with others’ contributions (Baron, Kerr & Miller, 1992). In fact,  
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47 concerns about social acceptance lead to cognitive suppression of unique perspectives (Carver &  
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49 Scheier, 1981; Sanna & Shotland, 1990). Team members who experience social acceptance  
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51 concerns thus conform to the team’s shared knowledge (Gruenfeld et al., 1996) and avoid  
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53 voicing new ideas and speaking up about potential mistakes (Edmondson, 1999). Finally, team  
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3 members may not actively seek out information from others if they are worried about being  
4 rejected (Flynn & Lake, 2008). For instance, according to the “consensus implies correctness”  
5 heuristic (Chaiken & Stangor, 1987), members who communicate shared information are viewed  
6 as competent and knowledgeable by other team members, compared to those communicating  
7 unique information. Because members cannot readily validate unique information, the team  
8 remains uncertain about the information’s value (Littlepage, Perdue & Fuller, 2012), making  
9 unique information-sharing a risky interpersonal behavior. Wittenbaum, Hubbell, and  
10 Zuckerman (1999) showed that teams’ preference for shared information stems from members’  
11 tendency to positively evaluate one another during their discussion of shared information.  
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24 As a result of these dynamics, team members are more likely to mention and repeat  
25 communal information and to rate it as more important, accurate, and relevant than unique  
26 information (Larson, Foster-Fishman, & Keys, 1994). This is unfortunate because a team’s  
27 ability to optimize information exchange relies on the members’ expression of their  
28 differentiated knowledge (Baumeister, Ainsworth & Vohs, 2016). Pooling diverse information  
29 allows the team to discover a so-called hidden profile and to choose the best decision alternative;  
30 failing to do so may leave them with a suboptimal alternative (Stasser & Titus, 2003). Research  
31 shows that teams rarely discover the hidden profile because they discuss proportionally more  
32 communal than unique information (Wittenbaum, Hollingshead, & Botero, 2004). Moreover, a  
33 team’s awareness of dissent encourages more sharing of unique information among the  
34 members, even when the dissenter advocated non-optimal options (Brodbeck et al., 2002;  
35 Nemeth, 1986). This is because the group engages in more divergent thinking to respond to a  
36 dissenting voice, which leads to uncovering of new information in their conversation.  
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3 We argue that social worth affirmation should help team members transcend their  
4 concerns about social acceptance in a given team and be less preoccupied about whether they  
5 will be accepted by their team (Hypothesis 1), and this will lead team members to contribute  
6 their unique ideas and perspectives. Individuals who reflect on their core values broaden their  
7 sense of self and are able to focus on bigger-picture goals, thereby allowing them to see threats  
8 as relatively small and less relevant to their self-worth (Critcher & Dunning, 2014; Schmeichel  
9 & Vohs, 2009; Sherman et al., 2013). An affirmation of social worth will thus broaden a team  
10 member's sense of self (i.e., I see myself as a valued contributor in many different social  
11 contexts), and this broader sense of self will help them move beyond a narrow focus on a  
12 particular threat to the self (Sherman & Hartson, 2011). Thus, social worth affirmation should  
13 reduce team members' social acceptance concerns, motivating them to express their unique ideas  
14 and perspectives. Thus, we predict:

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31 *Hypothesis 2a. Social worth affirmation from close relationships increases a team's*  
32 *unique information sharing.*

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35 *Hypothesis 2b. The relationship between social worth affirmation and information*  
36 *sharing in teams is explained by social acceptance concerns.*

### 37 38 **OVERVIEW OF THE STUDIES**

39 We devised three intervention studies to test our hypotheses while striving to maximize  
40 internal validity (using an experimental design to allow for causal inference) and external  
41 validity (using behavioral measures across different team contexts). Our field studies focus on  
42 three different samples and team contexts: senior executives (Study 1), military cadets (Study 2),  
43 and working adults in virtual teams (Study 3). After confirming that social worth affirmation can  
44 be experimentally manipulated in our main studies, we turned to probing whether one's beliefs  
45 about social worth affirmation stand as a distinct construct. In Validation Studies 1 and 2, we  
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3 created and validated a new scale intended to capture beliefs about social worth. We showed that  
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5 it differs from other theoretically relevant constructs, and it influences information sharing.  
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### 8 **Methodological Note on Intervention Studies**

9 We sought to use an intervention in which a team member's outside social network could  
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11 provide social worth affirmation. We adapted the instructions from the Reflected Best Self  
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13 Exercise™ (Spreitzer, Stephens & Sweetman, 2009; Quinn et al., 2011) as our social worth  
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15 affirmation intervention. We intended to draw upon each team member's own close  
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17 relationships, such that they can develop a broad, rich understanding of themselves (Roberts et  
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19 al., 2005a, 2005b), and provide evidentiary support for what social value an individual brought to  
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21 his or her network. We asked participants to write three narratives describing a time that they  
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23 could remember making their best contribution, and then to identify people in their own network  
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25 who could provide them with narratives about their contributions. In Study 1, after participants  
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27 received their social worth affirmation (i.e., read the narratives from their network), they created  
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29 a statement that compared and integrated their self-narratives with the narratives from their  
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31 social network (Roberts et al., 2005a). In Studies 2 and 3, we eliminated the final comparison  
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33 step in order to streamline the intervention and focus on social worth affirmation.  
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### 39 **STUDY 1**

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41 We designed our first intervention study to examine whether affirming social worth  
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43 enhances team information sharing for a problem-solving task in a 10-day crisis simulation  
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45 related to public health. This context is valuable in terms of external and ecological validity  
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47 because the executives (who were all leaders from different government agencies around the  
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49 world attending an executive education course) often performed similar tasks in their respective  
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51 organizations. In the introductory session for the simulation, the executives were instructed to  
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53 use their personal expertise to identify the issue at hand, contribute their unique perspectives and  
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3 knowledge to the team, and develop policy recommendations. Specifically, the executive  
4 education program explained that the simulation teams were designed to maximize the diversity  
5 of skills and expertise. As such, they should actively contribute and pool their unique experience  
6 and knowledge as effectively as possible in the crisis simulation. Thus, each team's performance  
7 depended on the ability to share and integrate unique expertise, experiences, and information.  
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15 Because the simulation took place over a relatively long period of time (i.e., 10 days),  
16 there were obvious difficulties in capturing each person's information sharing during team  
17 interactions. As a proxy for effective information sharing, we used executive teams' overall  
18 performance, as rated by independent expert panels who were blind to condition. In the treatment  
19 groups, we randomly assigned senior leaders to the social worth affirmation treatment before  
20 they started working on the crisis simulation. Executives assigned to control groups received the  
21 social worth affirmation treatment after the conclusion of the study. This method allowed us to  
22 test the link between social worth affirmation and information sharing in teams, which was  
23 implicit in the team's performance.  
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### 35 **Sample and Procedures**

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37 The sample consisted of executives attending a leadership development program at a top  
38 government school in the United States. Our sample of leaders were career civil servants (the  
39 majority worked for the U.S. government) or current or former military officers. We collected  
40 data from four sessions across two years: October–November 2013 ( $N = 31$ ), February–March  
41 2014 ( $N = 70$ ), April–May 2014 ( $N = 80$ ), and October–November 2014 ( $N = 65$ ). Thus, a total  
42 of 246 individuals were studied ( $M_{age} = 48.47$ ,  $SD_{age} = 7.13$ ; 73% male).  
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51 ***Pre-arrival assignment for all senior leaders.*** All program participants completed the  
52 pre-arrival assignment (writing down three best-self narratives, identifying one's social network,  
53 and soliciting best-self narratives from one's personal network). This approach ensured that all  
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3 participants benefited from social worth affirmation (albeit lagged for participants in control  
4 groups) and also reduced possible Hawthorne-effect concerns (i.e., participants altering their  
5 behavior as a result of being part of a study). Since all leaders participated in the initial set-up of  
6 the intervention, our approach allowed us to isolate the specific effect of experiencing the social  
7 worth affirmation (i.e., reading the best-self narratives from one's network).  
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15 A few weeks before participants arrived on campus, the program staff emailed all  
16 participants and asked them to complete the three-step pre-arrival assignment following the  
17 instructions from the Reflected Best Self Exercise™ (Spreitzer, Stephens & Sweetman, 2009;  
18 Quinn et al., 2011). First, all participants described three narratives from their lives in which they  
19 were at their best and making a positive contribution to others. Second, participants identified 5  
20 to 10 people in their social network who could submit narratives about the participants' impact.  
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Participants were encouraged to include a diverse mix of contacts, including friends, mentors, family members, customers, and colleagues. Third, these social network members were contacted and invited to write three detailed narratives describing occasions when the focal participant made their best contributions. Only our third-party service provider had access to the contact information and the narratives. The service provider compiled the narratives and created a report for each participant. An anonymized example of a narrative might read as follows:

“I remember a time when you were telling me about your daughter getting married. You arrived to find lots of the basics were not sorted out – things like the music and the seating. Basic things that are necessary for a good party. As you were telling me how you helped her get things sorted, it dawned on me that this is what you do for us at CorpCo. You take all the good ideas and good intentions and make them into a reality of operating a business. I know it is not easy to accomplish these realities, but you make it seem easy. As you were telling me about the wedding, what I realized is that your ability to see the logistics and the necessary steps comes naturally to you when it does not to others. I saw how you really push yourself to make things happen – to make visions into reality. I think your daughter is lucky to have a mom like you, and I know I am lucky to work with you.”

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3       ***Group assignment and experimental manipulation.*** In order to manipulate social worth  
4 affirmation and observe its effects on team performance, the program director assigned  
5 participants to teams consisting of five or six fellows. The program director then randomly  
6 assigned teams to either treatment or control conditions, with a caveat that no two team members  
7 were from the same organization. We made this explicit, such that participants were aware that  
8 each team member brings unique expertise. There were 42 groups (22 treatment and 20 control  
9 groups) across four program sessions. All participants sat together as teams on the third day of  
10 Week 1, when each individual learned about their team assignment and received an envelope.  
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21       Following Quinn et al. (2011), individuals in teams that were assigned to the treatment  
22 condition received a report of their best-self narratives, and a worksheet that prompted reflection  
23 by writing a self-portrait incorporating new insights from the best-self narratives (see Online  
24 Appendix A)<sup>1</sup>. Teams in the control condition did not receive best-self narratives, but instead  
25 received a worksheet to prepare for a team discussion on leadership communication to take place  
26 later in one of their classes. Specifically, control participants were asked to think about three  
27 times in their career when they observed a leader's impressive communication success, or a  
28 leader's communication failure in detail (see Online Appendix B).<sup>2</sup> All teams were given an hour  
29 to complete their tasks. Participants were told not to discuss what they had received with others,  
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44 <sup>1</sup> All online materials can be found here:

45 [https://osf.io/5s79d/?view\\_only=b75ecda91a754a9682d2a44b76215411](https://osf.io/5s79d/?view_only=b75ecda91a754a9682d2a44b76215411).

46 <sup>2</sup> We developed the materials for our control teams with two considerations in mind: first, the materials  
47 must be designed to meet the executive education program's specific learning goals around leadership,  
48 and second, the materials should not draw attention to the participants' own social worth. However, we  
49 should note that our materials may have not been sufficiently neutral, so there remained a possibility that  
50 our prompts for the controls, and not the social worth affirmation treatment, created a difference between  
51 the two conditions. For this reason, we conducted an additional study using Amazon Mechanical Turk in  
52 which we measured our manipulation check (i.e., felt social worth) after participants ( $n = 200$ ) wrote  
53 about leadership communication (adapted from Online Appendix B) or about their most recent trip to a  
54 grocery store as a neutral condition. We found no significant difference between the two conditions for  
55 felt social worth,  $t(198) = -0.55, p = .584$ .  
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3 both to give the treatment groups an opportunity to reflect privately on what they had received  
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5 and to minimize suspicion of the control groups that they had received different materials.  
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8 ***Crisis simulation as a problem-solving task.*** All teams played the role of an Emergency  
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10 Watch Team that was working in the state government to monitor developments following a  
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12 report of a coronavirus detected in their state (see Online Appendix C). Participants received  
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14 information from various sources (e.g., tweets, news stories) for 10 days leading up to the  
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16 briefing day, which they had to incorporate in their final presentation as they developed policy  
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18 recommendations for the decision-makers (in our case, an expert panel). On the day of the  
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20 briefing, each team made a 20-minute presentation on the assessment and recommendations for  
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22 state action, and the panel of external experts consisted of senior leaders from the U.S.  
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24 government and faculty members from the university. The expert panel spent five minutes giving  
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26 each team performance feedback on their analyses, integration, and proposed responses to the  
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28 hypothetical crisis. Prior to providing the feedback to the teams, each expert on the panel  
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30 completed an evaluation form with our dependent variable measure. Each team presented to a  
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32 panel of top state officials and experts consisting of faculty members with various types of  
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34 expertise as well as external experts from the U.S. government. In each program cohort, after all  
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36 data from the crisis simulation were collected, we debriefed all teams in a separate session and  
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38 distributed the report of best-self narratives to those in the control condition.  
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#### 44 **Measures**

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46 ***Team performance.*** Each panel of three to four experts (a total of 16 experts, all blind to  
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48 condition) evaluated up to six teams' presentations. The experts' ratings demonstrated acceptable  
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50 interrater reliability indices ( $rWG = .77$  and average deviation = .46), which suggests that  
51  
52 assessments of a single target group were reliable. Intraclass correlation was also acceptable  
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54 ( $ICC(1) = .69, p = .004$ ). Thus, we created a mean score for each group by aggregating experts'  
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3 ratings. Teams' final presentations were evaluated using the program's existing metric of team  
4 performance: *effective communication* (whether the team members communicated their  
5 recommendations effectively), *creativity* (whether their recommendations were creative and  
6 innovative), *clarity* (whether their recommendations were clear and succinct), *feasibility*  
7 (whether the policy recommendations were realistic and feasible), and *overall value* of the  
8 content to the decision-maker. Since we used both 5-point and 7-point scales, we standardized  
9 the scales within sessions using *z* scores. We created a summary variable by averaging the items  
10 to indicate overall team performance ( $\alpha = 0.97$ ), as all items loaded on a single factor (eigenvalue  
11 = 4.67, variance explained = 93.33%)  
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## 23 24 **Results**

25 ***Data analysis strategy.*** We controlled for theoretically relevant covariates that may have  
26 influenced team-level outcomes. Thus, we controlled for team-specific demographic  
27 characteristics, such as mean age (used as a proxy for average experience and expertise; Stewart,  
28 2006) and gender composition (Bear & Woolley, 2011), both of which are relevant to team  
29 information sharing and performance. In addition, we controlled for team size, drawing on  
30 previous work showing that smaller teams are more likely to share information and make  
31 effective decisions than larger teams (Cruz, Boster & Rodríguez, 1997). Finally, we added a  
32 dummy-coded variable for expert panel. This control variable also allowed us to control for any  
33 factors that could have changed over time (e.g., course schedule and curriculum). We report  
34 summary statistics and zero-order correlations among the key variables in Table 1.  
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48 \*\*\*\*\* Insert Table 1 about here \*\*\*\*\*  
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51 ***Social worth affirmation and team performance.*** The teams assigned to the *treatment*  
52 condition ( $M_{treatment} = .32, SD_{treatment} = .98$ ) outperformed those in the *control* condition ( $M_{control}$   
53 =  $-.35, SD_{control} = .93$ ),  $t(40) = 2.26, p = .029$ . The effect of social worth affirmation on team  
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3 performance was robust,  $b = .66$ ,  $SE = .28$ ,  $p = .025$ , even after controlling for cohort, team size,  
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5 mean age, and gender composition (see Table 2).  
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8 \*\*\*\*\* Insert Table 2 about here \*\*\*\*\*  
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## 10 **Discussion**

11 Study 1 focused on how teams of senior leaders integrated information and performed in  
12 the context of a realistic 10-day crisis-simulation task, which served as a proxy for team  
13 information sharing. Results revealed that teams performed better, as rated by experts, when  
14 members received social worth affirmation (compared to teams consisting of members who did  
15 not receive social worth affirmation). Notably, both our treatment and control teams activated  
16 their social network and wrote their own best-self narratives 10 days before their final  
17 presentation. This suggests that any difference in performance between the two conditions can  
18 reasonably be attributed to social worth affirmation.  
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30 Despite some important strengths of Study 1, there are several limitations. First, the link  
31 between information sharing and team performance was implicit. Even though performance  
32 depended on integrating members' unique experiences and backgrounds, we could not directly  
33 observe the team's information sharing processes across the 10 days. As such, it is possible that  
34 the results reflected other effects of social worth affirmation. For example, it is possible that  
35 social worth affirmation increased individuals' positivity, resulting in better decision-making and  
36 performance aside from information sharing (Fredrickson, 2013). It also is possible that because  
37 social worth affirmation is personal and emotional, it improved group norms such as  
38 psychological safety and trust, which lead to better performance (Hu, Erdogan, Jiang, Bauer, &  
39 Liu, 2018). Finally, while reflecting on and writing about one's reflected best-self-portrait in  
40 Study 1 could have strengthened the magnitude of the effect, it clouded how social worth  
41 affirmation affects teamwork. We designed Study 2 to explicitly address these limitations.  
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## STUDY 2

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5 In Study 2, we adopted the hidden-profile paradigm (Stasser & Titus, 1985) to examine a  
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7 team's ability to actively share uniquely distributed information among the team members. We  
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9 worked with two classes of military cadets in the United States Air Force who were receiving  
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11 pre-commissioning training at the Officer Training School in Montgomery, Alabama. We aimed  
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13 to rule out the possibility that the effect of social worth affirmation is driven primarily by  
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15 positive mood. Research conducted by Emich (2014) demonstrated that team members  
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17 experiencing positive affect shared more unique information in the hidden-profile paradigm. By  
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19 comparing the condition of social worth affirmation to another condition in which we simply  
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21 increased team members' positive emotions, we attempted to rule out the possibility that our  
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23 intervention is simply a different way to induce positive affect. To do so, military cadets in the  
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25 treatment groups received the social worth affirmation before they completed a team task (the  
26  
27 Mt. Everest simulation). Those in the control groups did not receive the treatment until after the  
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29 team task was concluded, but instead received a positive-affect intervention. This approach  
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31 helped us isolate our proposed mechanism (i.e., concerns about social acceptance) from mood  
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33 effects.  
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39 Moreover, to directly test whether alternative pathways, rather than social acceptance  
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41 concerns, explain the effect of social worth affirmation, we tested five possible mechanisms. In  
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43 so doing, we first explored the possibility that social worth affirmation increases positive affect  
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45 and feelings of self-worth, and decreases negative affect (unrelated to anxiety that could arise  
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47 from social acceptance concerns). Second, we explored the possibility that social worth  
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49 affirmation influences the ways in which team members treat each other, thereby creating a  
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51 specific group norm. If the personal, emotional nature of best-self narratives allows team  
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53 members to be vulnerable, it could lead to a team culture of greater psychological safety and  
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3 trust, both of which are relevant to team performance (DeJong, Dirks, & Gillespie, 2016; Frazier  
4 et al., 2017). To rule out these possibilities, we tested each of these alternative mechanisms.  
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### 7 8 **Sample and Procedures**

9 Two classes at the Officer Training School ran for eight weeks, from June 28, 2017, to  
10 August 25, 2017, and from July 5, 2017, to August 31, 2017. A total of 330 cadets ( $M_{age} = 28.26$ ,  
11  $SD_{age} = 3.98$ ; 82% male) in 66 five-person teams completed the process of identifying and  
12 nominating their social network and participated in the Mt. Everest simulation (Roberto &  
13 Edmondson, 2008). On average, participants nominated 11.81 ( $SD = 3.39$ ) narrative providers  
14 and received 5.23 narratives ( $SD = 4.16$ ). We compared numbers of narrative providers  
15 identified and narratives received, and they were not statistically significantly different between  
16 treatment and control groups ( $ps > .42$ ). Each class consisted of three squadrons, and each  
17 squadron consisted of 10 to 13 flights. All teams were randomly assigned, regardless of their  
18 membership in squadrons and flights. Cadets who did not identify and nominate their social  
19 network ( $n = 13$ ; 4%) were still invited to attend the Mt. Everest simulation, but they formed a  
20 separate group and thus were not included in treatment or control groups. Two groups did not  
21 complete the Mt. Everest simulation due to technical issues, leaving a total of 64 teams.  
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39 The task was a web-based, one-hour simulation that allows five-person teams to make a  
40 series of decisions in the face of challenges as they climb Mt. Everest together. In this  
41 simulation, teams are faced with situations in which (a) their members have asymmetric and  
42 conflicting goals and (b) the information cues critical to solve the problem are not shared, but  
43 rather distributed among the team members. Although individuals can achieve specific goals  
44 through their own decisions at different stages in this simulation, the more important goals (with  
45 higher points) can only be attained through coordination of decisions within the team (Pearsall &  
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3 Venkataramani, 2015). Thus, to perform well, members must actively discuss and share  
4 information with each other. Our timeline of measures and activities are illustrated in Table 3.  
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7 \*\*\*\*\* Insert Table 3 about here \*\*\*\*\*  
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10 ***Week 1 assignment for all cadets.*** At the end of Week 1, all cadets identified their social  
11 network and solicited best-self narratives from their network, as in Study 1.  
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14 ***Group assignment and experimental manipulation.*** Cadets were randomly assigned to  
15 either the treatment or the control condition in a team of five with specific roles to play during  
16 the simulation. The night before the simulation, all cadets were invited to different auditoriums  
17 based on their condition. Cadets assigned to the treatment condition received an electronic report  
18 based on their condition. Cadets assigned to the treatment condition received an electronic report  
19 of the best-self narratives from their social network and were told to bring their report to the  
20 simulation. The following is an example of a best-self narrative, using pseudonyms:  
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28 “Charlie embodies the wingman spirit, putting service before self, going out of her way to  
29 help others. I received two calls from students of a local high school and a recent college  
30 graduate that were interested in joining the military and needed advice on the process. I  
31 immediately contacted Charlie and asked if she could take time out of her schedule to  
32 mentor these two young men. Despite having to work late on her coursework and testing  
33 she was able to help them. One has since joined the US Army and the other has submitted  
34 an application for OTS to the Air Force officer selection board.”  
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37 The next day, the cadets sat together as teams for 30 minutes and shared one or more of  
38 the narratives with their team members. The teams in the control condition did not receive the  
39 report but were told that they would receive their report the following Monday. Instead, they  
40 were instructed to sit together as a team for 30 minutes and were told to each recall and reflect on  
41 a positive event or experience in their lives.  
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49 ***Surveys pre-Mt. Everest simulation.*** All cadets completed a survey in class before they  
50 started working in teams. This survey measured our proposed mediator (concerns about social  
51 acceptance) as well as alternative mechanisms (positive and negative affect, and self-worth).  
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3       ***Mt. Everest simulation.*** Once all cadets completed the survey, they were introduced to  
4 the Mt. Everest simulation via an introductory video that provided an overview of the simulation.  
5 Teams' objective was to maximize their team performance, which was determined by the sum of  
6 the goals achieved by individual team members while solving problems collectively. This video  
7 also showed instructions to help the cadets navigate the online simulation platform and provided  
8 role information for each cadet. After the video, they were told to go to the flight rooms with a  
9 goal of completing the simulation in an hour. Once they completed the task, they were asked to  
10 complete another survey, and then received their final scores in the debrief.  
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## 21 **Measures**

22       ***Manipulation check (social worth).*** Each participant rated their feelings of social worth  
23 using a 3-item scale (Grant & Gino, 2010) that included "I feel valued as a person," "I feel  
24 appreciated as an individual," and "I feel that I made a positive difference in others' lives" (1 =  
25 Strongly disagree, 7 = Strongly agree;  $\alpha = .92$ ). An average score for feelings of social worth  
26 from all team members was used as a manipulation check.  
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34       ***Concerns about social acceptance.*** We measured the extent to which each team member  
35 felt anxious about being accepted by other members using a 4-item scale adapted from Leary's  
36 (1983) brief Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale (1 = "Disagree strongly" to 7 = "Agree strongly");  
37  $\alpha = .89$ ). Sample items included "I am worried about what kind of impression I make in the  
38 upcoming team task," and "I am afraid that my team will find fault with me."  
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46       ***Team information sharing.*** We followed prior research (e.g., Pearsall & Venkataramani,  
47 2015; Tost, Gino & Larrick, 2013) and used the Mt. Everest simulation to examine the teams'  
48 ability to collectively solve a problem. Three challenges were presented to all teams during the  
49 simulation. Each challenge involved a problem that could only be solved if all team members  
50 actively provided unique information. For example, for the medical challenge, the team could not  
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3 make an optimal decision (e.g., deciding not to proceed to the next camp and avoiding frostbite)  
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5 if the environmentalist did not provide the team with a screenshot of the wind-chill chart to  
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7 calculate the predicted temperature in the next camp. Because the members were not aware  
8  
9 which information was critical to solving the problem, often, unique information was not  
10  
11 presented to the team. Teams whose members actively contributed their information to the team  
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13 discussion were able to solve the problem (similar to a hidden-profile task). Therefore, we used  
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15 the likelihood of solving the problem in each challenge as our measure of information sharing.  
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19 *Alternative mechanisms.* We tested whether mechanisms other than social acceptance  
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21 concerns (such as affect, feelings of self-worth, psychological safety and trust) might explain the  
22  
23 relationship between social worth affirmation and team information sharing. For positive and  
24  
25 negative affect, we asked the cadets to indicate the extent to which they were currently feeling  
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27 different emotions (1 = “Not at all” to 7 = “Extremely”) using the 10-item scale from Barsade  
28  
29 (2002): pleasant, happy, optimistic, and warm for positive affect ( $\alpha = .93$ ) and unhappy,  
30  
31 pessimistic, gloomy, lethargic, depressed, and sad for negative affect ( $\alpha = .91$ ). For feelings of  
32  
33 self-worth, we used Critcher and Dunning’s (2015) 8-item scale of positive self-worth. Cadets  
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35 responded to each statement, such as “Overall, I feel positively toward myself right now,” “I feel  
36  
37 very much like a person of worth,” and “I do not feel very confident in myself right now”  
38  
39 (reverse-coded) (1 = “Not at all” to 7 = “Extremely”;  $\alpha = .94$ ). For psychological safety, we used  
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41 a 6-item scale from Edmondson (1999). The cadets indicated the extent to which they agreed or  
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43 disagreed on a 7-point scale (1 = “Disagree strongly” to 7 = “Agree strongly”;  $\alpha = .69$ ). An  
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45 example item is “When someone makes a mistake in this team, it is often held against him or  
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47 her.” For trust, we used a 7-item scale of trust in teams adapted from the work of Robinson and  
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3 Rousseau (1994) using the same 7-point scale (1 = “Disagree strongly” to 7 = “Agree strongly”;  
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5  $\alpha = .86$ ). An example item is “My group is open and up-front with me.”  
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## 8 **Results**

9 **Data analysis strategy.** Similar to Study 1, we compared the team-level outcomes  
10  
11 between treatment and control groups, controlling for mean age and gender composition as well  
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13 as the participants’ class (Class 1 or 2) in all statistical analyses. Team size was not included, as  
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15 it did not vary across different teams in this study. We report means, standard deviations, and  
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17 zero-order correlations among the key variables in Table 4.  
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21 \*\*\*\*\* Insert Table 4 about here \*\*\*\*\*  
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23 **Manipulation checks.** The treatment effect on feelings of social worth was positive and  
24  
25 significant ( $M_{treatment} = 5.89$ ,  $SD_{treatment} = .45$  vs.  $M_{control} = 5.58$ ,  $SD_{control} = .61$ ),  $t(62) = 2.28$ ,  $p =$   
26  
27  $.026$ , suggesting social worth affirmation successfully increased the team’s felt social worth.  
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30 **Social worth affirmation and information sharing.** We tested whether social worth  
31  
32 affirmation increases information sharing in teams (i.e., the number of problems that each team  
33  
34 was able to solve by sharing and integrating unique information cues). The treatment effect on  
35  
36 information sharing in teams was positive and significant ( $M_{treatment} = 1.64$ ,  $SD_{treatment} = .71$  vs.  
37  
38  $M_{control} = 1.15$ ,  $SD_{control} = .79$ ),  $b = .48$ ,  $SE = .19$ ,  $p = .014$ . See Table 5 for the regressions.  
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41 \*\*\*\*\* Insert Table 5 about here \*\*\*\*\*  
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44 **Concerns about social acceptance as a mechanism.** We tested whether social worth  
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46 affirmation decreases the team’s average concerns about social acceptance. As theorized, the  
47  
48 treatment effect on concerns about social acceptance was negative and statistically significant  
49  
50 ( $M_{treatment} = 3.46$ ,  $SD_{treatment} = .62$  vs.  $M_{control} = 3.82$ ,  $SD_{control} = .6$ ),  $b = -.35$ ,  $SE = .15$ ,  $p = .029$ .  
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52 We then examined whether social acceptance concerns mediate the relationship between social  
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54 worth affirmation and information sharing. Bootstrapping analysis with 1,000 iterations revealed  
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3 that social acceptance concerns explained the relationship between social worth affirmation and  
4 information sharing (bias-corrected 95% confidence interval = [.018, .104]).  
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8 *Alternative mechanisms.* We explored the possibility that the effect of social worth  
9 affirmation is driven by alternative mechanisms. Our results revealed that the team's average  
10 positive and negative affect did not differ significantly across the two conditions,  $ps > .203$ .  
11  
12 Similarly, the team's average self-worth did not differ significantly,  $p = .799$ . Notably, social  
13 worth affirmation had a positive and marginally significant effect on psychological safety  
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15 ( $M_{treatment} = 5.68, SD_{treatment} = .33$  vs.  $M_{control} = 5.49, SD_{control} = .46$ ;  $b = .19, SE = .10, p = .059$ )  
16  
17 and a significant effect on trust ( $M_{treatment} = 6.22, SD_{treatment} = .30$  vs.  $M_{control} = 5.87, SD_{control} =$   
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19  $.49$ ;  $b = .36, SE = .10, p = .001$ ). However, none of the five measures were not significantly  
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21 correlated with information sharing, and they did not mediate the relationship between social  
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23 worth affirmation and information sharing.  
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### 30 **Discussion**

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32 Study 2 directly tested and supported Hypothesis 2a, namely that social worth affirmation  
33 improves information sharing in teams. Importantly, this study allowed us to contrast social  
34 worth affirmation with positive-affect induction, and we still found a similar effect as in Study 1.  
35  
36 In Study 1, we relied on the collective outcome (expert-rated team performance) as a proxy for  
37 information sharing. In Study 2, we used a simulation with three specific challenges that each  
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39 required team members to share unique information.  
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47 Our results from Study 2 also supported Hypothesis 1 and 2b, namely that social worth  
48 affirmation reduced team members' concerns about social acceptance, and that the psychological  
49 mechanism of improved information sharing is members' reduced concerns about social  
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51 acceptance. We also tested and eliminated several other plausible alternative mechanisms, such  
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53 as positive and negative affect, feelings of self-worth, psychological safety, and trust. These  
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3 findings confirm that reducing members' concerns about social acceptance prior to working in a  
4 team matters because it affects team information-sharing processes.  
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### 7 8 **STUDY 3**

9 In Study 3, we set out to provide more insights into the specific communication patterns  
10 among team members by directly observing and capturing the frequency of sharing unique  
11 information cues in a virtual chat room. We used a modified, virtual hidden-profile task that  
12 allows team members to interact online using both communal and unique information. The  
13 virtual and anonymous nature of this study also allowed us to examine if the results from Studies  
14 1 and 2 generalized. After we randomly assigned participants into either a treatment (social  
15 worth affirmation) or a control group, they took part in a team decision-making task based on the  
16 hidden-profile task paradigm. Other than working on the decision-making task, there was no  
17 interaction among the team members, which allowed us to further isolate the effect of social  
18 worth affirmation. In addition, unlike Studies 1-2, where individuals in the control condition  
19 completed a different exercise than the social worth affirmation to ensure that the two exercises  
20 take roughly the same time across conditions (i.e., writing about leadership communication), in  
21 Study 3, the control groups did not complete an alternative exercise, as all participants were  
22 physically isolated from each other.  
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#### 41 **Sample and Procedures**

42 We recruited study participants to a month-long study on Amazon Mechanical Turk,  
43 aiming to have at least 40 teams. All participants were first asked to identify people in their  
44 personal network who knew them well and could describe narratives of when the participants  
45 were at their best (like Study 2, participants did not write narratives). Subjects' social network  
46 was then invited to write three detailed narratives describing occasions when the participant  
47 made his or her most positive contribution. Only participants who received at least three best-self  
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3 narratives from their contacts who have a different IP address from the focal participant were  
4  
5 deemed eligible to proceed to the team task. Out of 159 participants who were eligible, a total of  
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7 123 participants (21 treatment vs. 20 control groups; 41 teams total) participated in the team task  
8  
9 ( $M_{age} = 32.78$ ,  $SD_{age} = 11.26$ , 31% male) and received a \$15 Amazon.com gift card once they  
10  
11 completed the follow-up online survey a month later.  
12  
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14  
15 ***Group assignment and experimental manipulation.*** Once we randomly assigned eligible  
16  
17 participants into three-person teams, all team members of each team were invited to meet in a  
18  
19 virtual chat room through Chatzy.com at the same time. We then randomly assigned these teams  
20  
21 into either a treatment or a control group. Treatment groups received their social worth  
22  
23 affirmation (i.e., best-self narratives) the night before their scheduled session, following the same  
24  
25 procedure as in Studies 1 and 2, while control groups received theirs after they completed the  
26  
27 follow-up survey. Unlike Studies 1 and 2, the teams neither sat together nor shared any non-task  
28  
29 information with each other. The following is an example of a best-self narrative:  
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33 “I first met Mike in the early 80’s. He was in a wheelchair and smiling, I remember.  
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35 When he could come to school, he was in pain but was full of grit. As teenagers, we did  
36  
37 not see Mike as special; he wanted to be one of our classmates, and he was the one with a  
38  
39 smile that could light up the room. Today, I realize just how much determination was  
40  
41 transmitted in his smile.”

42  
43 ***Hidden-profile task.*** As in the typical hidden-profile task (Stasser & Titus, 1985), each  
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45 participant was given a different set of data, and as a team, the participants tried to collaborate  
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47 and pool their information to effectively solve the problem. Participants were told to work  
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49 together in the virtual chat room to solve a business problem in order to evaluate how different  
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51 factors impact team decision-making. We adapted Graetz et al.’s (1998) decision-making task,  
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53 using a three-person team task in which participants played the role of purchasing executives for  
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55 a restaurant chain. Each participant was told to read the task instructions and received a unique  
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3 checklist of the attributes satisfied by opening a branch in each of three locations: East Point  
4 Mall, Starlight Valley, and Cape James Beach (see Online Appendix D for detailed instructions,  
5  
6 checklists, and information distribution). They were instructed to read the checklist and keep it  
7  
8 available for the team task.<sup>3</sup> The checklist involved information that was common to all members  
9  
10 of the team as well as information unique to each participant. Based on its overall profile,  
11  
12 Starlight Valley satisfied the most criteria and should have been selected first, followed by Cape  
13  
14 James Beach and then East Point Mall. This conclusion, however, was not readily apparent  
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16 because the checklist differed for each participant. Taken alone, the initial checklists for all  
17  
18 participants supported East Point Mall as most desirable, followed by Cape James Beach and  
19  
20 Starlight Valley. It was necessary for team members to collaborate and combine information to  
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22 correctly rank-order the different restaurant locations. All virtual discussions among participants  
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24 were captured in text format by the experimenter who served as a time-keeper for our analyses.  
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31 *Follow-up survey.* Following this team-based task, all participants were instructed to  
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33 leave the chat room and complete the follow-up survey measuring individual members'  
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35 generalized feelings of social worth as a manipulation check. Unlike Study 2, we placed this  
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37 manipulation check after the team task based on the concern that drawing participants' attention  
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39 to the source of their emotional states can eliminate the impact of such feelings on cognition and  
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45  
46 <sup>3</sup> In most research using the hidden-profile paradigm, each team member must rely on their recollection of  
47  
48 the information given to them while integrating pieces of unique information from different members to  
49  
50 find the best alternative (Winquist and Larson, 1998). However, after running a small pilot study, we  
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52 found that virtual participants were not likely to pay close enough attention to the information cues  
53  
54 distributed at the beginning. We thus modified this traditional approach to the hidden-profile task by  
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56 allowing each team member to see all their information cues (both shared and unshared) instead of  
57  
58 making them memorize the cues for use during the group task. This made it easy for the teams to make an  
59  
60 optimal decision; only three teams, two from the treatment groups and one from the control groups, failed  
to identify the best option. We repeated all our analyses while excluding teams that were not successful at  
problem-solving. This exclusion did not change the direction or significance of our results on information  
sharing.

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3 behavior (Schwarz & Clore, 1983; Schwarz, 1999). Thus, participants were not asked about their  
4  
5 feelings of social worth until after they received best-self narratives and completed the team task.  
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## 7 8 **Measures**

9        **Information sharing.** Two coders read the transcripts in their entirety and rated a random  
10  
11 sample of the chat logs for the unique and communal cues exchanged (Stasser & Titus, 1985),  
12  
13 with 10% of the data overlapping. The coders showed good agreement (average ICC1 = .75,  
14  
15 ICC2 = .83,  $R_{wg}$  = .99). We used numbers of unique and communal cues as dependent measures.  
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18        **Manipulation checks.** We used the same scale for social worth as in Study 2 ( $\alpha$  = .92).  
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20

21        **Exploratory measure of question asking.** In this study, we explored whether social worth  
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23 affirmation influences the ways in which team members communicate. Conceptually, social  
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25 acceptance concerns may trigger a protective self-presentational style that focuses on preventing  
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27 failures rather than promoting success (Schlenker & Leary, 1995), resulting in a passive  
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29 interaction style. Following the logic for Hypothesis 1, we suspected that when team members'  
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31 social worth is affirmed, they might communicate in ways that reflect reduced social acceptance  
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33 concerns and a heightened sense of agency. This should manifest not only in their willingness to  
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35 contribute unique information during the team task (Hypothesis 2a) but also in their willingness  
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37 to engage in direct question asking. We tested this possibility by having the coders count the  
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39 number of times that team members requested information directly vs. indirectly (Flammer,  
40  
41 1981) and using them as dependent measures in our exploratory analysis. Direct information  
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43 requests refer to when a team member addresses another person or the team about a specific  
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45 piece of information (e.g., "A27, do you have anything on East Point?"). Indirect information  
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47 requests are made by either probing for more information or setting the stage for someone else  
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49 on the team to offer information (e.g., "I am missing information for East Point"). Agreement  
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51 between raters was high (average ICC1 = .82, ICC2 = .89,  $R_{wg}$  = .96).  
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## Results

**Data analysis strategy.** Similar to Studies 1 and 2, we compared the team-level outcomes between treatment and control groups. We accounted for mean age and gender composition in all statistical analyses, consistent with two other studies, although it is unlikely that age or gender information was shared in this virtual setting. Team size and timing of the session were not included, as they did not vary across different teams in this study. We report means, standard deviations, and zero-order correlations among the key variables in Table 6.

\*\*\*\* Insert Table 6 about here \*\*\*\*

**Manipulation checks.** The treatment effect on feelings of social worth was positive and statistically significant ( $M_{treatment} = 4.05$ ,  $SD_{treatment} = .51$  vs.  $M_{control} = 3.63$ ,  $SD_{control} = .60$ ),  $b = .41$ ,  $SE = .18$ ,  $p = .027$ ), suggesting that our manipulation of social worth affirmation was successful in inducing team-level feelings of social worth.<sup>4</sup>

**Social worth affirmation and information sharing.** We tested how social worth affirmation affected quality of information sharing based on how often team members shared unique cues (Table 7). As hypothesized, the treatment effect on the number of unique cues shared was positive and significant ( $M_{treatment} = 14.71$ ,  $SD_{treatment} = 2.00$  vs.  $M_{control} = 12.85$ ,  $SD_{control} = 2.87$ ),  $b = 1.78$ ,  $SE = .78$ ,  $p = .028$ , while the effect on the number of communal cues was not statistically significant ( $M_{treatment} = 12.33$ ,  $SD_{treatment} = 2.41$  vs.  $M_{control} = 13.2$ ,  $SD_{control} = 1.40$ ),  $b = -.88$ ,  $SE = .63$ ,  $p = .168$ . The total number of information cues shared also did not differ between treatment and control conditions ( $M_{treatment} = 27.05$ ,  $SD_{treatment} = 3.67$  vs.  $M_{control} = 26.05$ ,  $SD_{control} = 3.63$ ),  $b = .90$ ,  $SE = 1.15$ ,  $p = .439$ .

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<sup>4</sup> We aggregated the individual-level data to assess team-level feelings of social worth, despite the lack of sufficiently high intraclass correlations. While individual-level data on feelings of social worth are expected to vary within a team, we believe that this is an example of how our team-level construct can be a “fuzzy representation” of the lower-level construct (see Chan, 1998; Kozlowski and Klein, 2000).

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3 \*\*\*\*\* Insert Table 7 about here \*\*\*\*\*  
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5 ***Exploratory analysis on question asking.*** We also tested whether social worth  
6 affirmation influenced how often team members directly requested information from each other.  
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8 As expected, the treatment effect on the number of direct requests was positive and significant  
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10 ( $M_{treatment} = 9.62, SD_{treatment} = 3.98$  vs.  $M_{control} = 6.55, SD_{control} = 2.80$ ),  $b = 2.95, SE = 1.07, p =$   
11  
12  $.009$ , while the effect on the number of indirect requests was negative and significant ( $M_{treatment} =$   
13  
14  $3.52, SD_{treatment} = 2.18$  vs.  $M_{control} = 5.95, SD_{control} = 3.47$ ),  $b = -2.40, SE = .85, p = .008$ . The  
15  
16 total number of requests did not differ across treatment and control conditions ( $M_{treatment} = 13.14,$   
17  
18  $SD_{treatment} = 4.71$  vs.  $M_{control} = 12.5, SD_{control} = 4.48$ ),  $b = .55, SE = 1.48, p = .712$ , suggesting  
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20 that social worth affirmation shifted team members' style of questioning from indirect to direct.  
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## 24 **Discussion**

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26 We predicted and demonstrated that social worth affirmation would make team members  
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28 more likely to volunteer unique information cues (which is a critical predictor for optimal  
29  
30 decision-making), as compared to those in the control condition. Thus, Hypothesis 2a was  
31  
32 supported. Importantly, by analyzing the written communications within a team, Study 3 allowed  
33  
34 us to capture the specific ways in which social worth affirmation can activate high-quality  
35  
36 information sharing. Results showed that teams with social worth affirmation were more likely  
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38 not only to share unique information (vs. communal information) but also to directly ask for  
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40 information (vs. indirect information requests), which suggests that they were less inhibited in  
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42 seeking out information from others. Albeit exploratory, this finding is consistent with previous  
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44 research arguing that information sharing involves both providing unique information and  
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46 acquiring information from others (Emich, 2014).  
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## 53 **VALIDATION STUDIES**

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55 While Studies 1-3 have demonstrated the efficacy of social worth affirmation as an  
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3 intervention, we have not clarified whether social worth affirmation is a theoretically distinct  
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5 construct. We hereby illustrate how our construct differs from the related constructs of self-  
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7 affirmation and self-verification, given the relevance of these theories. Table 8 reflects the  
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9 underlying assumptions that each theory makes about human motivation, valence of self-views,  
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11 source, psychological state, and operationalization.  
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15 \*\*\*\*\* Insert Table 8 about here \*\*\*\*\*  
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17 In addition, given our theorizing that relational identity as a valued contributor underlies  
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19 social worth affirmation, we empirically established social worth beliefs as a distinct construct  
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21 (Validation Study 1) and then tested its relationship with information sharing, independent of  
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23 team-specific social acceptance concerns (Validation Study 2).  
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### 26 **Validation Study 1**

27 We partnered with the alumni association of a midwestern university in the United States  
28  
29 to recruit working employees. A total of 237 employees ( $M_{age} = 44.67$ ,  $SD_{age} = 14.59$ ; 37%  
30  
31 female) participated and received a \$5.00 Amazon.com gift card as a token of appreciation.  
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33 Based on theory, we developed a 3-item measure of social worth beliefs: “I bring something  
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35 valuable to my social network,” “I help others in my social network by being myself,” and “I feel  
36  
37 that I bring unique value to others.”<sup>5</sup> In addition to measuring self-affirmation (4-item) and self-  
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39 verification (4-item) as the constructs that are theoretically most relevant to social worth beliefs,  
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41 we also measured the related constructs of self-efficacy in strengths (6-item) and self-esteem (4-  
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49 <sup>5</sup> In creating the measure of valued contributor identity, we paid special attention to capturing the  
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51 relational identity that would theoretically be internalized as a result of social worth affirmation. In order  
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53 to ensure that this 3-item scale was reliable, we subjected this scale to a separate sample of 301 full-time  
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55 employees ( $M_{age} = 38.80$ ,  $SD_{age} = 10.64$ ; 55% female) who were recruited from Amazon Mechanical Turk  
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57 in exchange for \$1.00. Our measure had high internal consistency ( $\alpha = 0.89$ ). Factor analysis allowed us  
58  
59 to retain a single factor (eigenvalue = 2.05, variance explained = 81.55%; factor loadings = .90, .90,  
60  
and .91, respectively). We thus retained all items to be used as a parsimonious measure of social worth  
affirmation with the alumni sample.



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3 item). All measures used a 7-point scale (1 = “Strongly disagree”, 7 = “Strongly agree”).  
4

5       **Scales.** To measure self-affirmation, we used Critcher and Duning’s (2011) 4-item scale  
6 (e.g., “I seek to affirm my worth as a person;” “I emphasize why something has my life affirming  
7 and whole”) ( $\alpha = .87$ ). To measure self-verification, we used Wiesenfeld, Swann, Brockner, and  
8 Bartel’s (2007) 4-item scale (e.g., “At work, people accept me for who I am;” “On my job, I can  
9 be myself”) ( $\alpha = .88$ ). We used a 6-item scale of self-efficacy in strengths adapted from Tsai,  
10 Chaichanasakul, Zhao, Flores, & Lopez (2014). We specifically asked how confident  
11 participants were in their ability to use their strengths (e.g., “use your strengths at work;” “find  
12 ways to apply your strengths in the things you do every day”) ( $\alpha = .90$ ). Last, we used 4 items  
13 related to self-esteem from Rosenberg (1965) (e.g., “I feel that I have a number of good  
14 qualities;” “All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure” (reverse-coded) ( $\alpha = .77$ ).  
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28       **Results.** The 3-item scale of social worth beliefs had good internal consistency ( $\alpha = .81$ ),  
29 and a factor analysis retained a single factor (eigenvalue = 2.18, variance explained = 72.73%).  
30 Using Stata 15’s structural equation modeling, we examined whether our five-factor model was a  
31 reasonably good fit. Results indicated that our model had a good fit with the data ( $\chi^2 [179] =$   
32 424.47; RMSEA = .08; CFI = 0.91; TLI = 0.90; SRMR = 0.08), and no other lower-factor  
33 models had a better fit. All constructs were positively correlated with social worth beliefs, but no  
34 correlation was greater than .37 ( $r = .35, p < .001$  for self-efficacy in strengths use;  $r = .33, p$   
35  $< .001$  for self-verification;  $r = .20, p = .002$  for self-affirmation; and  $r = .37, p < .001$  for self-  
36 esteem). Validation Study 1 thus established social worth beliefs as a distinct construct.  
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## 49 **Validation Study 2**

50       Having validated our scale, we tested if social worth beliefs increase information sharing  
51 with 200 virtual workers with full-time work experience ( $n = 198$  after removing two  
52 participants who did not follow instructions;  $M_{age} = 31.53, SD_{age} = 11.04$ ; 64% female) from  
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3 Prolific Academic (www.prolific.co). They received \$2.00 for participating in a 15-minute study  
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5 that was advertised to involve a group decision-making task. All participants were led to believe  
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7 that they were randomly matched with a virtual selection committee. During the group task, we  
8  
9 randomly assigned participants into one of two conditions (*team threat* vs. *no team threat*). This  
10  
11 let us explore whether the relationship between one's beliefs about social worth and information  
12  
13 sharing is robust even when members receive threatening messages from their new teammates.  
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17 **Method.** We first instructed participants to complete the social worth scale developed in  
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19 Validation Study 1 and then began a simulated group task, with their screen informing them that  
20  
21 the online program would form groups. To make this task as realistic as possible, participants  
22  
23 entered their nickname (to ensure anonymity) to display to fictional teammates. Then, they  
24  
25 introduced themselves in writing with a summary of their work experience and their personal and  
26  
27 professional strengths to help other team members understand who they were and what they  
28  
29 brought to the table. Thirty-five seconds after submitting their introduction, participants received  
30  
31 a note from each of the team members. For both conditions, there was one neutral message that  
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33 read "Hi, thanks for the intro. Welcome!" However, the three other messages varied depending  
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35 on the condition to which the participant was assigned. For example, one fictional member wrote  
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37 "Not clear if we need your extra input on hiring, but nice to e-meet you" for the *team threat*  
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39 condition and "I am sure we'll need your extra input on hiring, and nice to e-meet you" for the  
40  
41 *no team threat* condition. The other two members' notes read "I have no idea how we're being  
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43 assigned as a team (probably random?), but you *don't seem like the right person to be on this*  
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45 *team [seem like the right person to be on this team]*" and "Honestly, *I can't say I am entirely*  
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47 *convinced – based on what you wrote, it looks like you may not have much to contribute to the*  
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3 *upcoming task [I am impressed – based on what you wrote, it looks like you'll bring some*  
4 *valuable insights to the team].”*  
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8 The participant then proceeded to the simulated group decision-making task (adapted  
9  
10 from Swaab, Phillips, & Schaerer, 2016, Study 2b). Participants played the role of a hiring  
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12 committee member and evaluated two job candidates. We instructed them that they first needed  
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14 to make an individual decision about which candidate they would recommend and that the group  
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16 would make a collective choice once the team members exchanged their recommendations. They  
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18 were informed that Candidate A and B each had four specific qualities (or a lack thereof) that  
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20 were relevant for the position but that this information was only available to the participant (but  
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22 not the other team members). This particular setup allowed study participants to decide how  
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24 much unique information to share with other team members in their recommendation. We  
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26 counted the number of information cues brought up in each participant's written  
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28 recommendation (up to 8;  $M = 2.71$ ,  $SD = 1.4$ ) as a measure of information sharing. Once all  
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30 participants made a recommendation and shared information about their preferred candidate, we  
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32 debriefed participants that in reality, there was no interaction with actual team members and they  
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34 were not actually selecting a job candidate.  
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40 **Results.** We first tested whether individuals' social worth beliefs (i.e., I bring value to my  
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42 social network) is related to their information sharing in a new team. Once we confirmed that our  
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44 dependent measure was not over-dispersed, we used a Poisson regression analysis to account for  
45  
46 the fact that our measure of information sharing is a count variable that is negatively skewed and  
47  
48 only takes non-negative integer values (Cameron & Trivedi, 1998). Our analysis revealed that  
49  
50 the more participants believed that they brought value to their own social network, the more  
51  
52 unique information that they shared with their team,  $b = .07$ , *robust SE* = .03,  $p = .034$ . In  
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3 addition, we controlled for team threat (1 = *team threat*, 0 = *no team threat*) in examining the  
4 relationship between social worth beliefs and team-specific information sharing. The relationship  
5 between social worth beliefs and information sharing remained significant,  $b = .07$ , *robust SE* =  
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.03,  $p = .037$ , but team threat was not a significant predictor of information sharing,  $b = -.04$ ,  
*robust SE* = .07,  $p = .561$ .<sup>6</sup> This finding suggests that social worth beliefs may operate regardless  
of whether other team members accept them or not. That is, team members' social worth beliefs  
are related to information sharing in a new team context, even when accounting for team-specific  
threats to social acceptance.

## GENERAL DISCUSSION

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Despite a team's potential to make better decisions than individual members, teams often  
are unable to capitalize on this potential because members' need to feel accepted prevents them  
from offering their unique perspectives. How can organizations prepare individual members to  
contribute the most to team discussions and outcomes? We propose social worth affirmation  
from *outside* the team as a novel approach to preparing members to contribute to a new team.  
Across three experimental studies and two validation studies, we showed that social worth  
beliefs are a distinct construct, and that social worth affirmation helped offset members'  
concerns about social acceptance by activating their relational identity as a valued contributor in  
a novel team setting. The results suggest that social worth affirmation allows individual members  
to reveal unique perspectives and information to other team members, and that these  
improvements in information sharing were driven by lower social acceptance concerns.

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<sup>6</sup> We also tested the possibility that such a relationship may be more pronounced under the *team threat*  
condition since holding a valued contributor identity may buffer the negative effect of receiving  
threatening messages from team members, thereby substituting the lack of social acceptance in the team  
and enhancing information sharing. However, no interaction between one's valued contributor identity  
and team threat was found,  $p = .912$ .

## Theoretical Contributions

*Relational Identity and Team Information Sharing.* The accessibility of important self-concepts has received little attention as an important factor for teams. Specifically, little research has been conducted on the psychological factors that could reduce individual team members' reluctance to communicate unique information. In this paper, we theorized and demonstrated how social worth affirmation from one's close relationships can reduce social acceptance concerns as individuals join a team. In this sense, our work addresses a significant gap in the literature, identifying and addressing micro-level motivations of team members (Sohrab, Waller & Kaplan, 2015).

On a related note, we also advance the literature on small group research by identifying a method of reducing members' concerns about social acceptance, thereby reducing one of the psychological barriers that impair information sharing in teams. We proposed that each member's relational identity as a valued contributor can become salient through social worth affirmation: that is, through highlighting of best-self narratives from close relationships. This idea speaks to the identity internalization process, which is inherently relational. Social feedback and validation from others have traditionally been tied to the identity internalization process in the literature (Ashforth & Schinoff, 2016; Sluss & Ashforth, 2007; Wallace & Tice, 2012). To the best of our knowledge, our study is the first to document that each team member's relational identity as a valued contributor within her own external relationships can be made more central, and create a lasting impact on her identity in a team. In the absence of such an identity, the social acceptance concerns inherent in early stage teams may reduce the likelihood of unique information sharing.

In addition, past research has been relatively mute on the individual's meta-perception of self (e.g., how I believe I am viewed by others) vs. the actual views of others (e.g., how I am

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3 narrated by others) (Kenny & DePaulo, 1993; Srivastava & Beer, 2005). We tackled this  
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5 challenge by providing team members with others' actual views in the form of best-self  
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7 narratives. As such, we build on theory regarding the processes through which relational identity  
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9 as an organizational member is claimed—and granted—in interactions with others (e.g., Bartel &  
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11 Dutton, 2001; DeRue & Ashford, 2010). Specifically, we argued that best-self narratives from  
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13 close relationships can be conceptualized as an act of granting identity, such that the recipient  
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15 can internalize and claim such an identity in a specific team context. In other words, coming to  
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17 see oneself as a valued contributor emboldens one to claim the same identity in a specific team  
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19 context, leading one to actively contribute to the team's process.  
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24         We focused on teams in the early stage of formation, as opposed to existing teams. This  
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26 allowed us to randomly assign individuals to teams so that we could attribute any differences in  
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28 teams to the intervention, rather than to team-specific characteristics. Our choice of emergent  
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30 teams in the three different contexts also was theory driven: research shows that self-affirmation  
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32 is most effective when introduced prior to initiation of a defensive response (e.g., Critcher,  
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34 Dunning, & Armor, 2010). At the group-level, research to date has emphasized the consequential  
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36 role of early interaction within a team in influencing the team dynamics afterwards  
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38 (Chattopadhyay et al., 2020; Gersick, 1988; Gersick & Hackman, 1990; Mathieu & Rapp, 2009).  
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40 Moreover, focusing on emergent teams is high in external validity, both because temporary  
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42 teams are increasingly common (Mortensen & Haas, 2018) and because our results show how  
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44 individuals can contribute to teams more effectively. Our research thus contributes to the team  
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46 literature by developing an early intervention that could help members see themselves as valued  
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48 contributors and share their unique information with the team.  
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3                   ***Relational Perspective on Self-Affirmation.*** By tapping into team members' close  
4 relationships, our research advances the self-affirmation literature. A large literature has  
5 demonstrated the importance of tapping into existing self-views in reducing threats (Cohen &  
6 Sherman, 2014; Jaremka et al., 2011; Stinson et al., 2011). One important contribution of our  
7 study is moving beyond an affirmation process that relies on self-insight. We have long  
8 understood that people's relational context has a significant influence on self-definition,  
9 suggesting that close relationships can help make certain identities salient to us (Ely, 1994;  
10 Mead, 1934). However, no research to date has investigated whether a team member can reach  
11 out to her close relationships outside her immediate team to affirm her in the team context. To  
12 date, the focus has been mainly on showing how self-affirmation can reduce group-serving  
13 biases. That is, in prior work, when individuals affirmed their personal values or important group  
14 values, it enhanced feelings of being a worthy group member, thereby reducing attributional  
15 biases (Sherman & Kim, 2005; Sherman et al., 2007). Even though this research broadened the  
16 scope of self-affirmation to include one's group as a possible resource for the self, the  
17 affirmation itself relied on individuals reflecting on personal or group values. Our paper thus  
18 extends the way that self-affirmation theory can be applied in the organizational context.

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20                   In addition, we contribute to the research taking an external perspective on teams, which  
21 has alluded to how teams manage their environmental resources (e.g., Ancona, 1990; Ancona &  
22 Caldwell, 1992). Specifically, our study isolates members' external social network as a potential  
23 source of affirmation of their social worth. To the best of our knowledge, our research is the first  
24 to focus on "relational resources" from close relationships as central to the literature on teams  
25 and to show how these resources can reduce team members' concerns about social acceptance  
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3 (Roberts et al., 2005a; p. 722) by initiating a change in one's relational identity. Our work thus  
4 broadens the repertoire of psychosocial resources on which individuals and teams can capitalize.  
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### 7 **Limitations and Future Research**

9 In addition to adding important theoretical insights, our paper offers a rigorous  
10 investigation of social worth and how it can be affirmed to improve and teach information  
11 sharing. Our field experiments, with very different types of participants and team contexts,  
12 demonstrated that improvements in information sharing were driven by lower social acceptance  
13 concerns, thereby revealing the conceptual mechanism. Our validation studies confirmed that  
14 social worth beliefs constitute a separate construct and predict information sharing.  
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23 As with any research, our work also has limitations that offer directions for future  
24 research. First, we theorized that social worth affirmation helps team members to internalize  
25 their valued relational identity, but our research does not provide direct empirical evidence for  
26 the extent to which this process of identity internalization occurs (i.e., to what extent do I see  
27 myself as a valued contributor?). In addition, we theorized that two distinct identity processes  
28 might occur as a result of social worth affirmation. That is, some individuals might primarily  
29 experience the affirmation of pre-existing self-views and be reminded of their identity as a  
30 valued contributor, while others experience a jolt from novel evidentiary support that was not  
31 part of their self-views previously. Following the call for methodological innovation to capture  
32 one's changing self-views (Roberts et al., 2005a), future studies could unpack the distinct  
33 intrapsychic processes of affirming one's relational identity versus incorporating one's newly  
34 revealed identity into self-views as a result of social worth affirmation.  
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51 Second, given that our intervention combined different types of best-self narratives and  
52 narrative providers (from both personal and professional networks) into a single intervention,  
53 there are many remaining questions to answer. For example, the quality and nature of social  
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3 relationships that provide affirmations may have important implications for an individual's  
4 feelings of social worth. Future research could examine the position of a focal individual in her  
5 social network (e.g., centrality) and levels of social support from close relationships as possible  
6 moderators. In addition, the perceived veracity and validity of best-self narratives may also play  
7 an important role. For instance, research in psychology has found that people whose self-worth is  
8 contingent on a specific domain (appearance or intelligence) may discredit their interaction  
9 partners' positive feedback ("you're just saying that"; Lemay & Clark, 2008). Although we  
10 encouraged participants to engage with a diverse subset of their social network, it is possible that  
11 the perceived veracity and validity of positive feedback may differ depending on the focal  
12 person's self-worth contingencies as well as the source of the positive feedback. Finally, future  
13 research may examine other forms of social worth affirmation in terms of how it affects self-  
14 views and behaviors at work. For example, studies may reveal that human resource interventions  
15 such as strengths-based performance feedback can increase employees' feelings of social worth  
16 and help them overcome their social acceptance concerns.

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36 Third, our operationalization of social worth affirmation differed across the three studies.  
37 Specifically, unlike Study 1, we used a streamlined approach for social worth affirmation in  
38 Studies 2 and 3, and in Study 2, participants shared their narratives with each other. Likewise,  
39 our control conditions varied across the studies (ranging from a leadership discussion, to a  
40 positive reflection, to a pure control). Although these differences demonstrate the robustness of  
41 the effect and show the generalizability of the research, future studies could explore different  
42 types of control conditions to tease apart the effect of social worth affirmation. For example,  
43 while all participants in our control groups reached out to their social network so we could  
44 isolate the effect of the affirmation itself, future work could include a "no contact" condition to  
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3 examine the effect size. Additionally, while we built on Quinn et al.'s (2011) Reflected Best Self  
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5 Exercise™, future studies of social worth affirmation could engage in conceptual replication  
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7 with different forms of social worth affirmation, such as receiving a detailed thank-you note or  
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9 being honored by an employee recognition program. Future research also could examine which  
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11 form, duration, and frequency of social worth affirmation are most powerful in producing the  
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13 effects that we found in our research. Importantly, this could help pinpoint the role of  
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15 organizational contexts in determining which of employees' social values are highlighted.  
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19 Fourth, we examined our intervention at the team level, thereby requiring all members of  
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21 intervention teams to engage in social worth affirmation, which makes it impossible to know  
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23 whether the same approach would be effective if only one new member is joining a team. An  
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25 intriguing possibility for future research is to explore how one or two members' experiences of  
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27 social worth affirmation spill over to the team members who were not treated. Conceptually, it is  
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29 possible that one member who sees himself or herself as a valued contributor initiates positive  
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31 team dynamics by offering unique perspectives and directly asking questions, which encourages  
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33 others to do the same. In fact, recent research investigating the role of self-affirmation that  
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35 targeted a few minority members in an educational setting demonstrated the emergent ecological  
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37 effects for entire classrooms (Powers et al., 2016). The study showed that the density of minority  
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39 students who received value affirmation was positively correlated with the average performance  
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41 (i.e., grades) of the classes. Our exploratory analysis (in Study 3) also revealed that social worth  
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43 affirmation increased the frequency of asking direct questions; volunteering unique information  
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45 and asking direct questions could create positive norms of communication.  
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51 Finally, future research may reveal that social worth affirmation may interact with a  
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53 specific team's identity. We do not claim that social worth affirmation from one's close  
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3 relationships replaces the effort that teams themselves make to affirm each of their members'  
4 social worth. For teams that have time and resources to invest in creating a strong collective  
5 identity and knowledge of each other, social worth affirmation within a specific team context  
6 may still be effective. Future studies could compare the consequences of having two identities  
7 (i.e., an identity granted by one's close relationships vs. by other team members). Relatedly, we  
8 did not specifically focus on scenarios in which team members receive conflicting or coherent  
9 information about their social worth from their social network and from their teammates,  
10 although this would be fascinating to investigate. Although Validation Study 2 suggests that  
11 one's social worth beliefs may function independently from the specific threat from the team,  
12 future research could more closely examine whether receiving social worth affirmation can  
13 reduce the negative effect of experiencing social exclusion from a team.  
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### 28 **Practical Implications and Conclusion**

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30 Despite all the potential that individuals bring to a team, we know that teams often  
31 perform poorly due to poor communication and limited exchange of ideas among members. This  
32 happens when members worry about conforming and fitting in, rather than exchanging their  
33 unique data and perspectives. Social worth affirmation allows employers and employees to  
34 capitalize on their relational resources, heightening each member's sense of social worth and  
35 helping them share unique information. Thus, our work highlights the importance of creating a  
36 point of reflection to remind team members of their social worth. In particular, when individuals  
37 come to see themselves as valued contributors—with evidence about how they are valued by  
38 others—they are better equipped to offer their unique perspectives. Social worth affirmation may  
39 lead to an upward spiral in teams and organizations, where an intervention improves team  
40 information sharing, which in turn reaffirms each member's sense of self as a valued contributor.  
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individual and team functioning. Employers and team leaders might apply this understanding of social worth affirmation to enhance group processes in teams by engaging in practices that encourage team members to bring their relational identity as a valued contributor to work.

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**TABLE 1 Means, Standard Deviations, and Zero-Order Correlations among Key Variables, Study 1**

	Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
1	Treatment (vs. Control)	0.524	0.505				
2	Team Performance	−0.033	0.907	0.337*			
3	Team Size	5.952	0.661	−0.143	−0.183		
4	Mean Age	48.24	3.370	−0.035	0.175	−0.275 <sup>^</sup>	
5	Gender Composition	0.276	0.098	−0.160	0.142	0.061	−0.055

Note. Team performance was standardized using z-scores. \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \* $p < 0.05$ , <sup>^</sup> $p < 0.10$ .

**TABLE 2 Multiple Regression Analyses for Expert-Rated Team Performance, Study 1**

Predictor Variables	Team Performance	
	b	SE
Treatment (vs. Control)	0.661*	0.281
Team Size	-0.095	0.232
Mean Age	0.051	0.043
Gender Composition	1.863	1.541
Cohort #1	-0.289	0.530
Cohort #2	-0.170	0.727
Cohort #3	-0.397	0.397
N	42	
Overall F	1.38	
R-squared	0.221	
Adjusted R-squared	0.061	
Root MSE	0.879	

*Note.* Here, “b” refers to an unstandardized regression coefficient, and “cohort” refers to executive education program cohort (dummy-coded). \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \* $p < 0.05$ , ^ $p < 0.10$ .

**TABLE 3 Timeline, Measures, and Activities, Study 2**

Time Period	End of Week 1	Beginning of Week 3	Week 3 (Prior to Simulation)	Week 3 (Mt. Everest Simulation)	Beginning of Week 4
Measures/ Activities	All cadets were introduced to the social narrative process	The third-party service provider compiled the final report with all narratives	Treatment teams received the final report and shared the report with their members in Auditorium 1	After taking a survey, all teams were assigned to flight rooms to work on the Mt. Everest simulation	Control cadets received the final report
	All cadets were instructed to submit nominations to a third-party service provider, and narrative invitations were sent within 24 hours of nomination		Control teams did not receive the final report but were instructed to recall and reflect on an event that made them feel positive in Auditorium 2	Instructors debriefed on the Mt. Everest simulation	

**TABLE 4 Means, Standard Deviations, and Zero-Order Correlations among Key Variables, Study 2**

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1 Treatment (vs. Control)	0.484	0.504											
2 Felt Social Worth	5.715	0.583	0.279*										
3 Information Sharing	1.391	0.789	0.315*	0.198									
4 Program (Class)	1.424	0.498	-0.035	0.058	-0.158								
5 Mean Age	28.250	1.769	-0.061	0.074	-0.038	0.278*							
6 Gender Composition	0.180	0.182	0.004	-0.089	0.049	0.158	0.156						
7 Social Acceptance Concerns	3.635	0.633	-0.282*	-0.120	-0.301*	0.064	0.091	0.097					
8 Positive Affect	5.145	0.565	0.152	0.616***	0.151	-0.004	0.109	-0.160	-0.098				
9 Negative Affect	2.381	0.527	-0.128	-0.497***	0.017	0.142	-0.038	0.194	0.093	-0.577***			
10 Self-Worth	5.287	0.332	-0.027	0.394**	-0.115	-0.194	-0.059	-0.096	0.061	0.573***	-0.473***		
11 Psychological Safety	5.582	0.411	0.224^	0.559***	-0.040	0.223^	0.115	-0.005	0.028	0.284*	-0.335*	0.380**	
12 Trust	6.047	0.450	0.397**	0.661***	0.088	0.189	0.090	0.012	-0.080	0.446***	-0.549***	0.328**	0.728***

Note. \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \* $p < 0.05$ , ^ $p < 0.10$ .

**TABLE 5 Multiple Regression Analyses for Information Sharing, Study 2**

Predictor Variables	Information Sharing	
	b	SE
Treatment (vs. Control)	0.485*	0.191
Mean Age	0.006	0.056
Gender Composition	0.309	0.531
Program (Class)	-0.258	0.202
N	64	
F(4, 59)	2.140^	
R-squared	0.126	
Adjusted R-squared	0.067	
Root MSE	0.762	

Note. Here, “b” refers to an unstandardized regression coefficient. \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \* $p < 0.05$ , ^ $p < 0.10$ .

**TABLE 6 Means, Standard Deviations, and Zero-Order Correlations among Key Variables, Study 3**

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1 Treatment (vs. Control)	0.512	0.506									
2 Unique Information Cues	13.804	2.610	0.361*								
3 Communal Information Cues	12.756	2.010	-0.218	0.229							
4 Total Information Cues	26.561	3.640	0.139	0.843***	0.716***						
5 Indirect Information Requests	4.707	3.100	-0.396*	-0.285^	-0.060	-0.238					
6 Direct Information Requests	8.122	3.750	0.414**	0.089	-0.361*	-0.135	-0.126				
7 Total Information Requests	12.829	4.555	0.071	-0.121	-0.338*	-0.273^	0.577***	0.738***			
8 Felt Social Worth	3.845	0.590	0.364*	0.490**	0.068	0.389*	-0.348*	0.167	-0.100		
9 Mean Age	32.691	6.891	0.128	0.132	-0.034	0.076	-0.162	0.223	0.073	0.134	
10 Gender Composition	0.683	0.307	0.052	0.191	0.182	0.238	0.312*	-0.154	0.085	0.035	0.0205

Note. \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \* $p < 0.05$ , ^ $p < 0.10$ .

**TABLE 7 Multiple Regression Analyses for Measures of Information Sharing, Study 3**

Predictor Variables	Information Sharing			
	Unique Information Sharing		Direct Information Request	
	b	SE	b	SE
Treatment (vs. Control)	1.782*	0.782	2.954**	1.066
Mean Age	0.021	0.058	0.118	0.08
Gender Composition	1.373	1.304	-0.269	1.777
N		41		41
F(3, 37)		2.410 <sup>^</sup>		4.060*
R-squared		0.163		0.247
Adjusted R-squared		0.095		0.186
Root MSE		2.482		3.382

*Note.* Here, “b” refers to an unstandardized regression coefficient. “Unique information sharing” indicates the number of unique information cues shared, and “direct information request” indicates the number of direct information requests made. \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \* $p < 0.05$ , <sup>^</sup> $p < 0.10$ .

**TABLE 8 Social Worth Affirmation, Self-Affirmation, and Self-Verification**

<i>Constructs</i>	<i>Assumption on human motivation</i>	<i>Valence of self-views</i>	<i>Source</i>	<i>Psychological state</i>	<i>Operationalization</i>
<b>Self-affirmation</b>	<i>Pursue positive view of self</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Typically self-driven</i>	<i>Feelings of being affirmed</i>	<i>Writing about and/or reflecting on core personal values</i>
<b>Self-verification</b>	<i>Pursue a sense of coherence</i>	<i>Either positive or negative</i>	<i>Self and social interaction partners</i>	<i>Feelings of being known and understood by other team members</i>	<i>Receiving verifying appraisals from others</i>
<b>Social worth affirmation</b>	<i>Pursue a sense of social worth</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Self and social interaction partners</i>	<i>Feelings of being socially valued</i>	<i>Receiving narratives about valued strengths and contributions (evidentiary support) from social network</i>

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