Benevolent friends and high integrity leaders: How preferences for benevolence and integrity change across relationships

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ABSTRACT

Individuals value benevolence and integrity in their partners. However, in many workplace dilemmas benevolence and integrity conflict. Across 5 experiments (and 8 supplemental studies), we demonstrate that the relative importance individuals attach to having partners that prioritize either benevolence or integrity systematically shifts across relationships. We introduce the Size-Closeness-Hierarchy (SCH) Model, a theoretical framework to characterize preferences individuals have for benevolent versus high-integrity partners across workplace relationships that vary in group size, emotional closeness, and hierarchy. According to our model, as relationships involve more people, become more emotionally distant, and become more hierarchical (relational features common in leaders), individuals become more likely to prefer high-integrity partners. However, as relationships involve fewer people, become more emotionally close, and become more equal (relational features common in friends), individuals become more likely prefer benevolent partners. Our findings advance our understanding of the interplay between moral values, leadership, and interpersonal perceptions.

Kevin supervises a team of five people. One day, he learns that a member of his team arrived late for work because they were caring for an elderly parent. He knows that this team member has been struggling financially, but he also thinks that they could have arrived to work on time if they had planned ahead. Company rules state that an employee's pay should be docked for arriving late, but Kevin can choose whether or not to enforce this rule. In this situation, Kevin faces a dilemma: He could prioritize benevolence towards the team member (by not docking the team member's pay, thereby promoting the team member's welfare) or he could prioritize integrity (by docking the team member's pay, thereby consistently applying company rules across employees).

How will other employees perceive Kevin following his decision? If Kevin docks the team member's pay, will they want to be led by Kevin? Would they want to become friends with him? The present research answers these questions. We introduce the Size-Closeness-Hierarchy (SCH) Model, a three-factor framework to explain how people's choices to form relationships with benevolent versus high-integrity partners vary systematically as a function of group size, emotional closeness, and hierarchy. We theorize that as people expect relationships to involve fewer people, be more emotionally close, and be less hierarchical (three key relational features common among friends), actors are

more likely to prefer benevolent partners. In contrast, as people expect their relationships to involve more people, be more emotionally distant, and be more hierarchical (three key features common for a relationship with a leader), actors are more likely prefer high-integrity partners.

The present research advances our understanding of moral psychology and partner choice by examining how *intragroup* processes influence moral values and relationship preferences. Prior work has primarily applied a dyadic or intergroup lens to the study of morality – examining, for example, how individuals choose partners based on how they expect a partner to treat them (i.e., help vs. harm; Barclay, 2013, 2016; Warneken, 2018) or how people moralize otherwise immoral behavior if it preserves their group (Rai & Fiske, 2011). We bridge these perspectives by examining how features of groups (specifically, size, closeness, and hierarchy) influence people's beliefs about how a partner will treat them *relative* to others. Concerns about relative (mis)treatment play a unique role in guiding moral values and preferences in groups, but have been understudied. By introducing a three-factor framework to characterize features of workplace relationships that systematically influence concerns about relative (mis)treatment, we fill this gap. In doing so, we also demonstrate how the same moral actions can predictably promote or inhibit relationship formation, depending on key features of

the relationship.

1. Benevolence and integrity

People prefer friends, colleagues, and leaders who are moral (Goodwin et al., 2014). In particular, individuals prefer to associate with others who are benevolent (e.g., who protect and care for them) and who adhere to universal principles (e.g., who have integrity; Mayer et al., 1995; Moore et al., 2019). In many situations, however, individuals are forced to prioritize one of these values over the other (Schwartz, 1992). In the opening example, Kevin faces a choice between protecting the welfare of his coworker or consistently applying rules. In other words, he faces a conflict between benevolence and integrity. Conflicts between benevolence and integrity are common (Levine & Schweitzer, 2015; Lupoli et al., 2020). For example, Moore, Koch, and Levine (2022) found that over 40% of everyday ethical dilemmas involve conflicts between benevolence and integrity. In this article, we investigate how people judge and select partners based on how potential partners resolve conflicts between benevolence and integrity.

1.1. Benevolence and integrity

Consistent with prior work (e.g., Murray & Holmes, 2009), we define benevolence as a person's motivation to help or do good to other people, and we define integrity as a person's "motivation to adhere to universal principles in an impartial manner" (Moore et al., 2019, p. 2).[1]

In our investigation, we study perceptions of benevolence and perceptions of integrity as social perceptions that transcend specific relationships. Specifically, we investigate perceptions of benevolence as the extent to which an individual is perceived to be motivated to help others *in general*, and we investigate perceptions of integrity as the extent to which an individual is perceived to be motivated to impartially adhere to universal principles. Across our studies, we explore how actors' preferences for relationship formation depend on key features of the relationship and judgments of potential partners' benevolence and integrity.

It is possible for the same actions and the same people to be both high in benevolence and high in integrity. That is, benevolence and integrity are not always opposing moral principles. For example, it is possible for people to help and care for others (enact benevolence) based on a set of impartial and consistent rules (consistent with integrity), regardless of their proximity or similarity to the helper. Indeed, impartial benevolence is consistent with integrity (see Kahane et al., 2018, which uses the term beneficence to denote benevolence). In practice, however, people routinely face moral dilemmas that pit benevolence against integrity because benevolence is rarely applied impartially. Benevolence, and concern for others broadly, is typically inspired by feelings of empathy rather than the deliberate application of rules (e.g., Berman et al., 2018; Caviola et al., 2021; Loewenstein & Small, 2007; Small et al., 2007). For example, instead of helping others based on their level of objective need or donating money based on the amount of good each dollar could do, people typically extend help to others based on how emotionally attached they feel to a target in need, to the cause itself, or by momentary feelings of guilt or compassion inspired by a specific request. That is, when people exhibit benevolence, they typically attend to the unique features of the target they are helping and their current context (Moore et al., 2019), rather than overarching principles that would be

consistent with integrity.

Importantly, and central to our investigation, lay people expect benevolence and integrity to conflict. For example, Lupoli and coauthors (2020) found that people expected partners who were high (versus low) in compassion to prioritize benevolence over integrity by telling pro-social lies and by allocating money based on empathy rather than merit. We build on these findings to examine *when* – and specifically, in what relationships – actors are more likely to prefer benevolent versus high-integrity partners. We use the term "benevolent partner" to refer to a potential partner whom an actor expects to prioritize benevolence over integrity, and we use the term "high-integrity partner" to refer to a potential partner whom an actor expects to prioritize integrity over benevolence.

Conflicts between benevolence and integrity represent some of our most challenging organizational decisions, including decisions about how to allocate rewards and punishments (Batson et al., 1999; Deutsch, 1975; Mannix et al., 1995) and whether to report others' transgressions (Waytz et al., 2013). During these decisions, employees often have to decide whether to prioritize empathy or loyalty to specific others, or allocate rewards and punishments impartially across other organizational members. Empathy (Zaki, 2014), loyalty (Haidt & Graham, 2007; Waytz et al., 2013), mercy (Exline et al., 2003), and care (Gilligan, 1982) relate to benevolence; these values involve extending compassion and empathy to other individuals. In contrast, honesty (Larzelere & Huston, 1980), fairness (Greenberg, 1986, 1990), and justice (Kohlberg, 1964) relate to integrity; these values involve impartial adherence to principles and rules.

Benevolence-integrity dilemmas are conceptually distinct from utilitarian-deontological dilemmas, even though they may occasionally overlap with them. Utilitarian and deontological decisions are both governed by impartial principles that could signal integrity (if adhered to across situations and people). However, they focus on different principles: utilitarian decisions focus on increasing aggregate welfare whereas deontological decisions focus on following absolute rules. Although the utilitarian focus on promoting welfare is similar to benevolence, utilitarian decisions can also prescribe harm, which conflicts with benevolence. In general, the similarity between benevolence-integrity and utilitarian-deontological conflicts depends on the way utilitarian-deontological conflicts are operationalized. In the most well-studied utilitarian-deontological conflicts (i.e., trolley, or sacrificial harm, problems; Bauman et al., 2014), the utilitarian decision is more consistent with integrity (an impartial focus on efficiency) and the deontological decision is more consistent with benevolence (avoiding causing harm). However, in the famous Heinz dilemma – in which a person can steal medicine to help a suffering loved one (Kohlberg, 1981; see also Piazza & Landy, 2013) – utilitarian decisions are more consistent with benevolence (increasing utility by helping someone in need) and deontological decisions are more consistent with integrity (consistently applying a rule that prohibits stealing).

1.2. The Size-Closeness-Hierarchy (SCH) model of workplace relationships

We introduce the SCH model to explain how preferences for benevolent versus high-integrity partners shift across emerging relationships. We focus on emerging relationships because cues about benevolence and integrity are particularly likely to influence the emergence of new relationships. In existing relationships, cues about benevolence and integrity are likely to impact preferences, but these relationships will also be influenced by existing relationship history. Furthermore, emerging relationships are particularly important in business settings, where people are frequently forming new relationships, both within and between organizations.

We focus our theorizing on emerging relationships and consider the perspective of a self-interested actor deciding whether or not to enter a new relationship. Our theory builds on two key assumptions. First,

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[1] Although lay conceptualizations of integrity often equate integrity with morality, it is important to note that these constructs are distinct. Whether applying principles impartially (i.e., acting with integrity) is seen as moral depends on a number of factors, including culture, relational expectations, and context. In the present article we focus on whether benevolence or integrity is preferred in partners, not whether they are perceived to be moral. However, we address this question in Study S3 and S4 (see SOM 3.3 and 3.4).

actors value benevolent partners when they expect benevolence to be directed towards *them*. This assumption is consistent with existing research on partner choice and interpersonal trust. In deciding whether or not to enter a new relationship, actors assess their potential partner's moral qualities (e.g., Barclay & Willer, 2007; Baumard et al., 2013), and in particular, whether a partner is likely to be cooperative and helpful (i. e., benevolent) towards them (Dunn et al., 2012; Schweitzer et al., 2006).

In addition, we assume that actors care about *relative* treatment. People care not only about their absolute outcomes, but also about their outcomes relative to others' (e.g., Festinger, 1954; Garcia et al., 2010). In our context, we expect actors to be sensitive to whether or not potential partners will treat them well, *and* whether potential partners will treat them well relative to others. In particular, we expect actors to be concerned about being treated worse than others (Shaw, 2013). Integrity mitigates the risk of relative mistreatment.

High-integrity partners apply consistent and impartial principles when they make decisions. As a result, a high-integrity partner is likely to ensure that all group members are treated equally and that nobody suffers relative mistreatment. Therefore, we predict that actors will value benevolent partners when they expect a partner to devote their time and attention to them, but value high-integrity partners when they are concerned that a partner may devote their time and attention to others, at their expense.

Building on these assumptions, we consider three fundamental factors of relationships that systematically influence concerns about relative (mis)treatment and therefore preferences for a benevolent (vs. high-integrity) partner: group size, emotional closeness, and hierarchy.[2] Group size reflects the size of a group; this can range from dyadic relationships to large, multi-person groups. Emotional closeness refers to the extent to which partners feel cared for, understood by, and closely connected with each other (Parks & Floyd, 1996). Hierarchy refers to whether or not people are socially ordered such that those higher in a hierarchy control resources important to those below them in a hierarchy (Fiske, 1992). In our investigation, we consider the perspective of actors who have either lower power than a potential partner or are equal in power to a potential partner.

1.3. Group size

Group-size is a fundamental dimension of groups that has been studied in social psychology (Fiske, 1992; Postmes & Spears, 1998; Rai & Fiske, 2011), evolutionary psychology (Dunbar, 1993; Kurokawa & Ihara, 2009), organizational behavior (Aggarwal & O'Brien, 2008; Detert et al., 2007; Liden et al., 2004; Ouchi & Dowling, 1974), and economics (Hindriks & Pancs, 2002; Zhang & Zhu, 2011). We propose that actors are more likely to prefer high-integrity to benevolent partners as group size increases due to increased concerns about relative mistreatment. In a small group or dyad, a partner is likely to have sufficient time and attention to address the idiosyncratic needs of their partners. Therefore, within a dyad or small group, a benevolent partner is not risky. That is, actors are likely to believe that a partner who promotes others' welfare (i.e., is benevolent) will help *them* when they need help. As group size increases, however, attention becomes a scarce resource, and benevolent partners may no longer be able to attend to every group member's needs (Cogliser & Schriesheim, 2000; Henderson et al., 2009; Khatri & Tsang, 2003; Pearce, 2015). In a group, even a small, three-person group, actors may fear that benevolent partners will attend to the needs of others *selectively*. As a result, a focal group member risks neglect and relative mistreatment if a benevolent partner focuses

attention on another member (or members) of a group. Importantly, a high-integrity partner reduces this risk. A partner high in integrity will allocate resources in a predictable, principled way (Colquitt et al., 2012), ensuring that the amount of help each group member receives is fair.

1.4. Closeness

A second key relationship dimension is emotional closeness. Research in social psychology (Aron et al., 1991; Clark & Mills, 1979; Fiske, 1992; Rai & Fiske, 2011), evolutionary psychology (Sutcliffe et al., 2012; Tooby & Cosmides, 1996), cross-cultural psychology (Karremans et al., 2011; Uleman et al., 2000), and relationship psychology (Berscheid et al., 1989; Murray et al., 2002) identifies closeness as having a fundamental influence on social norms and preferences. For example, Clark and Mills (Clark & Mills, 1979, 2012) identify emotional closeness as a key factor that distinguishes communal from exchange relationships. In communal relationships, people provide benefits to others without expecting a commensurate benefit in return; in contrast, in exchange relationships, people who provide benefits to others expect a commensurate benefit in return (Clark et al., 1986; Clark & Mills, 2012).
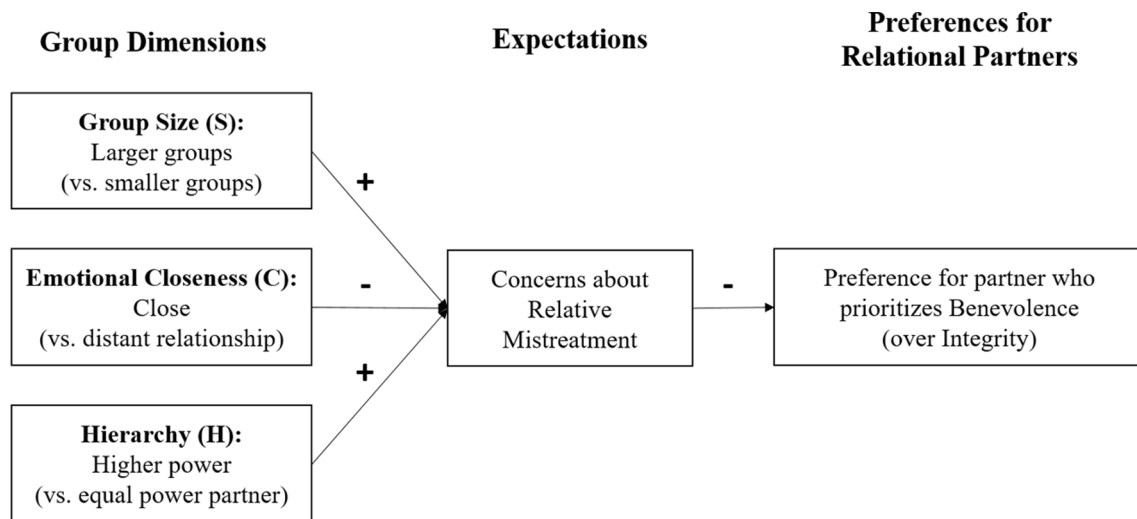
Building on this work, we postulate that actors will be more likely to prefer benevolent (versus high-integrity) partners in relationships they expect to be emotionally close, as opposed to emotionally distant. In emotionally close relationships, actors can expect partners to help them in times of need (Pillemer & Rothbard, 2018; Shaw et al., 2017). Furthermore, partners are more likely to recognize the needs of close others (Aron et al., 1991; Tu et al., 2016). That is, partners are more likely to have direct knowledge about and be able to perceive close others' struggles. Therefore, actors who are emotionally close with a partner, even when that partner has limited resources and attention, are likely to benefit from benevolence, including potential preferential treatment (Blader & Rothman, 2014).

Actors who are distant from a partner, however, may be concerned about neglect and relative mistreatment. For example, when a partner is distant with an actor but close with others in the group, the actor may worry that a distant partner will attend to the needs of close others and neglect their needs. A high-integrity partner reduces this risk. High-integrity partners are more likely to allocate their time, attention, and assistance equally across individuals (Lupoli et al., 2020). Furthermore, partners high in integrity are likely to adhere to a set of principles that require little knowledge of each partners' specific needs. As a result, a high-integrity partner is less likely to inadvertently neglect a distant actor due to lack of knowledge of their needs. Whether the actor is close or distant, a high-integrity partner will strive to be impartial and operate according to a set of principles. Consequently, we expect actors to be more likely to prefer high-integrity partners in distant relationships than they are in close relationships.

1.5. Hierarchy

The third fundamental relationship dimension we consider is hierarchy (Anderson & Brown, 2010; Fiske, 1992; Friesen et al., 2014; Gavetti, 2005; Greer et al., 2018; Hays & Bendersky, 2015; Price & van Vugt, 2014; Rai & Fiske, 2011). We consider the perspective of an actor when a potential partner has either equal or higher power. Although hierarchical relationships do not always entail power asymmetries (an idea we return to in the General Discussion), we focus on hierarchical relationships characterized by power asymmetries in the present research.

In most hierarchical relationships, a higher-power partner controls resources that are valuable to a lower-power counterpart (Fiske, 1992). Exploitation is an ever-present concern for low-power people in hierarchical relationships (Lam & Xu, 2018). As a result, the moral qualities of higher-power partners are particularly important (Giessner et al.,

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[2] Although there are likely many additional factors that influence moral preferences broadly, we focus on those that relate to concerns of relative mistreatment, and therefore preferences for benevolence versus integrity. We discuss some of these other potential factors in our General Discussion.

Fig. 1. Theoretical Depiction of the SCH Model: The effect of Group Size, Emotional Closeness, and Hierarchy on Preferences for Benevolent (vs. High-integrity) Partners.

2015; Gu et al., 2015; Ko et al., 2017). We build on prior work that has identified the importance of moral qualities by investigating the *specific moral qualities* that actors value within hierarchical relationships.

Specifically, we postulate that when actors expect potential partners to have higher-power, compared to equal-power, they will be more likely to prefer high-integrity partners to benevolent partners. In the workplace, people higher in a hierarchy have responsibilities that require them to exert power over people below them in the hierarchy. For example, partners higher in a hierarchy assign work tasks and allocate rewards and punishments to their lower-power counterparts. When high power partners oversee many lower-power people, benevolent partners, compared to high-integrity partners, may be more likely to allocate attention and resources unequally; this creates risk for lower-power actors, because it raises concerns about relative mistreatment.

We assert that integrity mitigates the risk of mistreatment for low-power actors. A high-power individual who is high in integrity is likely to allocate tasks, rewards, and punishments across individuals according to consistent guidelines.

1.6. Summary

The SCH Model builds a theoretical foundation for understanding how key features of a relationship (group-size, emotional closeness, and hierarchy) influence preferences for benevolence and integrity in partners. Our work differs from prior work in important ways. Prior work exploring how relationships shape morality (e.g., Rai & Fiske, 2011) has considered how moral values help actors *maintain* group and relationship structures based on the norms and expectations within each relationship. In contrast, the SCH Model focuses on how actors choose partners based on the *risks and benefits* of having partners who prioritize different moral values. The three factors of the SCH Model, group-size, emotional closeness, and hierarchy, describe key differences across relational structures that impact the benefits and risks of benevolent or high-integrity partners. According to the SCH Model, actors are more likely to prefer benevolent rather than high-integrity partners when their relationships will be equal, emotionally close, and within small groups. For example, actors will prefer benevolent friends – the proto-typical relationship of close, equal, dyads (Shaw et al., 2017). In contrast, individuals are more likely to prefer high-integrity partners over benevolent partners when forming relationships with a higher-power counterpart in an emotionally distant relationship, within large groups, as is often the case between followers and leaders. We summarize our theoretical model in Fig. 1.

2. Overview of current research

We test this model across 5 main and 8 supplemental studies (total *N* = 3,906). Across these studies, we examine preferences for benevolent and high-integrity partners. We systematically vary the group size, emotional closeness, and hierarchy of the relationship and examine participants' preferences for potential partners who privilege either benevolence or integrity. Notably, although we expect participants to become relatively more likely to prefer benevolent partners over high-integrity partners as relationships involve smaller groups (or dyads), become more emotionally close, and become more equal in power, we do not make predictions about absolute preferences for benevolent and high-integrity partners. For example, some participants may prefer benevolent partners over high-integrity partners across *all* of their relationships. Our theory predicts the relational domains in which this preference will be weaker versus stronger.

In Study 1, we manipulate group size, emotional closeness, and hierarchy. We find that preferences for benevolent and high-integrity partners systematically varies across these relationship dimensions according to our predictions. Interestingly, we also find the greatest differences between friends (dyadic, emotionally close, equal relationships) and leaders (group-based, emotionally distant, hierarchical relationships). In Study 2, we build on these findings to contrast preferences for benevolent versus high-integrity friends and leaders. In Studies 3, 4, and 5, we extend our investigation to consider different types of relationships. In Study 3, we examine preferences for benevolent versus high-integrity allies and leaders in a negotiation context. In Study 4, we hold hierarchy constant and examine the causal effect of emotional closeness on preferences for benevolent versus high-integrity leaders, and in Study 5, we examine the causal effect of group size on preferences for benevolent versus high-integrity partners across different types of relationships.

Across our studies, we use a wide range of inductions to manipulate benevolence and integrity, and we measure relationship preference and choice in several different ways. Further, in contrast to prior investigations of benevolence and integrity (e.g., Colquitt & Rodell, 2011), our experimental approach enables us to isolate the causal impact of prioritizing benevolence or integrity. Participants in our studies were not acquainted with their potential partners, and they made judgments and decisions based on the benevolence and integrity cues we provided.

Notably, we did not design our studies to test for interactions between the factors in the SCH model. Though we believe that potential interactions between group size, closeness, and hierarchy are both

possible and interesting, a full investigation of these interactions is beyond the scope of this article.[3] In this investigation, we focus on establishing the importance of the SCH factors and testing each of their independent effects. We consider the question of interactions further in our General Discussion.

In all of our studies, we determined the sample sizes in advance, and we report all measures and manipulations. We preregistered Studies 1, 3, 4, and 5. All analyses are performed on available data, without exclusions. We also conducted supplementary analyses to ensure that all of our results were robust to screening out suspicious or inattentive participants. Supplementary results as well as all study materials, data, and syntax are available on the Open Science Framework (https://tinyurl.com/BI-Preference-Project1).

3. Study 1

In Study 1, we examine how group size, closeness, and hierarchy influence preferences for benevolent versus high-integrity partners. We preregistered this study on AsPredicted.org (https://aspredicted.org/Q6J_NC3).

3.1. Method

Participants. We recruited 500 working adults (50.0% female, mean age = 38) in the United States and the United Kingdom from Prolific Academic.

Study Design and Procedure. We randomly assigned participants to a presentation order condition from a 2 (Group Size: Dyadic vs. Group-Based) X 2 (Emotional Closeness: Close vs. Distant) X 2 (Hierarchy: Equal vs. Hierarchy) within-subjects design. That is, participants saw all eight conditions in random order.

In this study, we first defined benevolence and integrity using the same definitions we introduce in this article, and we then explained how they could conflict with one another. We include the complete materials for Study 1 in Appendix A. Next, participants read descriptions of different workplace relationships and rated, for each type of relationship, whether they would prefer a benevolent or high-integrity partner. After indicating their preferences for a partner, we asked participants demographic questions before we debriefed them.

Role Manipulations. We manipulated each of the 3 factors (group size, emotional closeness, hierarchy) in our framework. We include the text that we used for each of the factor levels in Table 1. For example, we described a person in a group-based relationship, who is emotionally close, and equal as "A person who you see as an equal and with whom you work in a group of 5 people. This person also works closely with several other colleagues in your group. You are in an emotionally close but non-romantic relationship with this person.".

Dependent Variables. After reading about each role, we asked participants, "How strongly do you prefer a person in this role that relies on benevolence vs. integrity?" They responded to this question on a 7-point scale (-3 = "Strongly prefer integrity," 0 = "Prefer benevolence and integrity equally," 3 = "Strongly prefer benevolence"). We use a bipolar scale to better understand participants' *relative* preferences for benevolence versus integrity. Although benevolence and integrity do not always conflict, paradigms that create a conflict between these two constructs are useful for studying relative preferences (See Fetterman & Robinson, 2013; Levine et al., 2018 for examples of similar approaches for studying using one's head vs. heart and reliance on emotion vs.

reason, respectively).

3.2. Results

We report analyses for all 500 participants who completed the study. In Table 1, we include the descriptive statistics and t-tests comparing preferences for a benevolent versus high-integrity partner to the center of the scale (a neutral midpoint) within each relationship. We present these data graphically in Fig. 2.

We conducted a repeated measures ANOVA, with preferences for a benevolent versus high-integrity partner as the dependent variable and Group Size, Emotional Closeness, and Hierarchy as factors. Consistent with our pre-registration, we focus on the main effects of these three factors and include detailed analyses of interactions between our factors in SOM 2.2.

As a robustness check, we reanalyzed the data using cluster robust linear regressions and find similar results to our ANOVA analysis. Some of the participants selecting the midpoint of our bipolar scale ("Prefer benevolence and integrity equally") may not have cared about benevolence or integrity rather than caring about them equally. Therefore, we also ran a regression treating our DV as categorical to ensure that our results in other analyses are not driven by this ambiguity. These analyses yield similar results (see SOM 2.1 for details).

Group Size. We find a significant effect of group size on relative preferences for a benevolent partner over a high-integrity partner, $F(1, 499) = 92.84$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.17$. Participants preferred benevolent partners less in group-based relationships ($M = -0.61$, $SD = 0.96$) than they did in dyadic relationships ($M = -0.19$, $SD = 1.03$, *paired* $t(499) = 9.635$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.43$).

Emotional Closeness. We find a significant effect of emotional closeness on relative preferences for benevolent partners compared with high-integrity partners, $F(1, 499) = 317.31$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.39$. Participants preferred benevolent partners less in emotionally distant relationships ($M = -0.86$, $SD = 0.99$) than they did in emotionally close ones ($M = 0.06$, $SD = 1.09$, *paired* $t(499) = 17.813$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.80$).

Hierarchy. We find a significant effect of hierarchy on relative preferences for benevolent partners compared with high-integrity partners, $F(1, 499) = 36.82$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.07$. Participants preferred benevolent partners over high-integrity partners less in relationships with higher-power targets ($M = -0.55$, $SD = 1.10$) than they did in equal relationships ($M = -0.25$, $SD = 0.95$, *paired* $t(499) = 6.068$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.27$).

3.3. Discussion

Results from Study 1 support our theoretical framework. Group size, emotional closeness, and hierarchy each play an important role in shaping preferences for partners who privilege benevolence or integrity. Participants expressed the strongest relative preferences for benevolent partners over high-integrity partners when relationships were equal, emotionally close, and dyadic (a prototypical friendship; DeScioli & Kurzban, 2009; Laustsen & Petersen, 2015; Pillemer & Rothbard, 2018; Silk, 2003). In contrast, participants expressed the strongest preferences for partners who privilege integrity over benevolence when the potential partner had relatively higher power, was emotionally distant, and the relationship was group-based (a prototypical leader; Fiske, 1992; Ingram & Zou, 2008; Pillemer & Rothbard, 2018).

To further investigate these relationships, we conducted a separate study (Study S2 in the supplement) in which we asked participants to describe their ideal friends and leaders. Participants were significantly more likely to describe ideal friends as benevolent (rather than high-integrity), compared to leaders. In contrast, participants were much more likely to describe ideal leaders as high-integrity (rather than benevolent). We build on the findings from Study 1 and Study S1 in our next study, in which we compare preferences for benevolent versus high-integrity friends and leaders directly.

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[3] We also note that the particularly strong differences we identify between preferences for friends versus leaders are consistent with three (additive) main effects of size, closeness and hierarchy. Interactions are not required for it to be the case that preferences for benevolence are strongest when evaluating potential friends, and preferences for integrity are strongest when evaluating potential leaders.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics and Comparisons to Scale Midpoints by Condition in Study 1 ($N = 500$).

Hierarchy	Closeness	Group Size	Text manipulation (A person who you see as…)	Relationship Type	Preference (+is more Benevolent)		Difference from 0 ($df = 499$)			
					Mean	SD	t	p	d	95% CI
Equal	Close	Dyad	**an equal** and with whom you have a **one-on-one relationship**. This person does not work closely with any other colleagues. You are in an **emotionally close but non-romantic relationship** with this person.	Friend	0.48	1.49	7.14	*<0.001*	0.32	[0.22, 0.42]
		Group	**an equal** and with whom **you work in a group of 5 people**. This person also works closely with several other colleagues in your group. You are in an **emotionally close but non-romantic relationship** with this person.	Co-worker	0.11	1.37	1.73	0.08	0.08	[-0.01, 0.17]
	Distant	Dyad	**an equal** and with whom you have a **one-on-one relationship**. This person does not work closely with any other colleagues. You are **not emotionally close** with this person.	Ally	−0.67	1.41	10.58	*<0.001*	−0.47	[-0.57, −0.38]
		Group	**an equal** and with whom **you work in a group of 5 people**. This person also works closely with several other colleagues in your group. You are **not emotionally close** with this person.	Acquaintance	−0.91	1.34	51.22	*<0.001*	−0.68	[-0.79, −0.59]
Hierarchical	Close	Dyad	**a superior** and with whom you have a **one-on-one relationship**. This person bears responsibility for your professional outcomes but is not responsible for any other colleagues. You are in an **emotionally close but non-romantic relationship** with this person.	Mentor	0.11	1.59	1.60	0.11	0.07	[-0.01, 0.16]
		Group	**a superior** and who **leads a group of 5 people in which you work**. This person bears responsibility for your professional outcomes, as well as the outcomes of the other colleagues in your group. You are in an **emotionally close but non-romantic relationship** with this person.	Coach	−0.47	1.49	7.00	*<0.001*	−0.31	[-0.40, −0.22]
	Distant	Dyad	**a superior** and with whom you have a **one-on-one relationship**. This person bears responsibility for your professional outcomes but is not responsible for any other colleagues. You are **not emotionally close** with this person.	Supervisor	−0.69	1.56	9.84	*<0.001*	−0.44	[-0.54, −0.35]
		Group	**a superior** and who **leads a group of 5 people in which you work**. This person bears responsibility for your professional outcomes, as well as the outcomes of the other colleagues in your group. You are **not emotionally close** with this person.	Leader	−1.18	1.44	18.21	*<0.001*	−0.81	[-0.93, −0.71]

Note. A statistically significant mean implies that participants preferred a benevolent partner to a high-integrity partner. Participants read the "Text manipulation" but did not see the "Relationship Type" when they made their judgments. Participants responded on a scale from −3 (integrity) to + 3 (benevolence).
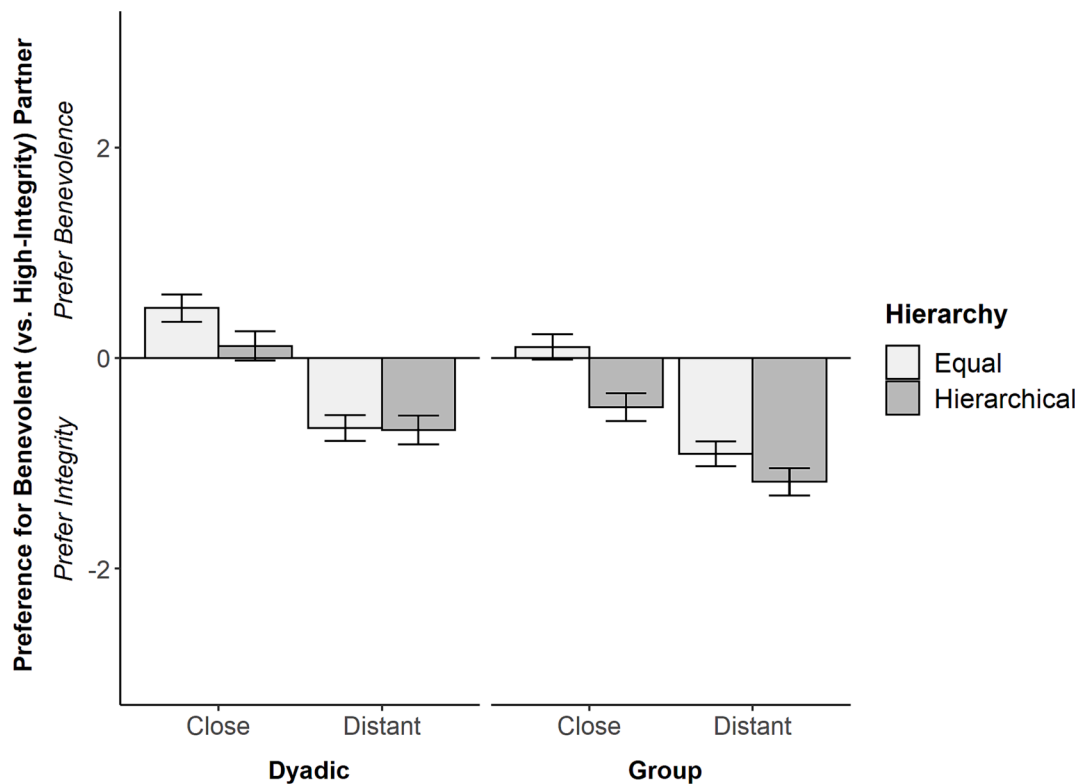
Fig. 2. Preference for Benevolent and High-Integrity Partner by Group Size, Emotional Closeness, and Hierarchy of the Relationship in Study 1 (*N* = 500) *Note*. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

4. Study 2

In Study 2, we use very different methods from those we used in Study 1. In Study 1, we described a relationship context and asked participants if they would prefer a benevolent or high-integrity partner. In Study 2, we describe a potential partner who had actually prioritized benevolence or integrity within a dilemma, and then asked whether participants would want to enter a relationship with them. In Study 2, we also explored the role of gender. Classic research on moral development argues that women are more likely to prioritize an ethic of care (which emphasizes empathy and benevolence), whereas men are more likely to prioritize an ethic of justice (which emphasizes rules and impartiality, similar to integrity; Gilligan, 1982). It is possible, therefore, that people prefer partners who prioritize the value that is consistent with gender-expectations. However, we found no consistent effects for gender. We report these results in SOM 2.5, and only discuss gender in the supplement.

4.1. Method

Participants. We recruited 203 adults (65.0% female; mean age = 22) from a city in the northeastern United States to participate in a laboratory study in exchange for a $10 show-up fee.

Study Design. We randomly assigned participants to one of four conditions in a 2 (Gender of target: Male vs. Female) × 2 (Decision: Benevolent vs. High-Integrity) between-subjects design.

The study involved three stages. In the first stage, participants engaged in a neutral writing exercise. In this stage, participants read a short description of a workplace dilemma involving two job candidates.

Participants had to choose between a candidate who had greater work experience and one who exhibited greater motivation. (The content of the writing exercise was not related to the focal experiment; we simply included it to enhance the realism of the study when we had participants read essays in the second stage of the study. We include the full text of this dilemma in SOM 1.1.) We gave participants 5 min to choose one of the two candidates and to write a short essay to explain their choice (free response). Participants wrote their responses by hand on the piece of paper.

After participants wrote their responses, we collected all the handwritten essays and informed participants that they would then read a response written by another participant in the session. We told them that the response they would read would involve a different workplace dilemma than the one about which they had just written.

Benevolence and Integrity Manipulation. In the second stage of the experiment, participants read an essay that was purportedly written by another participant. In reality, however, we gave participants prepopulated, hand-written essays. Each essay described one of two possible solutions to an ethical dilemma about how to allocate a bonus following a company-wide sales competition (see Flynn & Wiltermuth, 2010; Lupoli et al., 2020; Wiltermuth & Flynn, 2013). We include the text of these responses in Appendix B. These two essays reflected either benevolence or integrity. In the *Benevolence* condition (Fig. B1a), the target allocated more of the bonus to a colleague with a sick child. In the *Integrity* condition (Fig. B1b), the target allocated the bonus equally across all ten team members. In both conditions, the essay provided a brief explanation of the decision. To indicate the gender of the target, the essay sheet included a field labeled "Gender," and the purported author of the essay had circled either "male" or "female."

Table 2
Comparison of Targets Endorsing Benevolence vs. Integrity in Study 2.

Measure		Conditions						Comparison of Conditions		
		Benevolence		Integrity		Average				
	N	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*F*	*df*	*p*
Integrity (1 to 7 Scale)	200	5.26	1.04	6.14	0.78	5.71	1.02	46.23	198	*<0.001*
Benevolence (1 to 7 Scale)	200	6.27	0.73	4.26	1.36	5.26	1.48	168.07	198	*<0.001*
Leadership Selection (1 to 9 Scale)	203	6.11	1.80	7.08	1.29	6.59	1.64	19.52	201	*<0.001*
Preference for a Leader (1 to 7 Scale)	200	5.02	1.12	5.66	0.88	5.35	1.05	20.19	198	*<0.001*
Preference for a Friend (1 to 7 Scale)	200	5.96	0.76	4.98	0.93	5.46	0.98	66.76	198	*<0.001*

Note. This table reports comparisons of dependent variables collected in Study 2 based on whether targets prioritized benevolence or integrity in an essay exchange. All significant p-values are reported in italics.
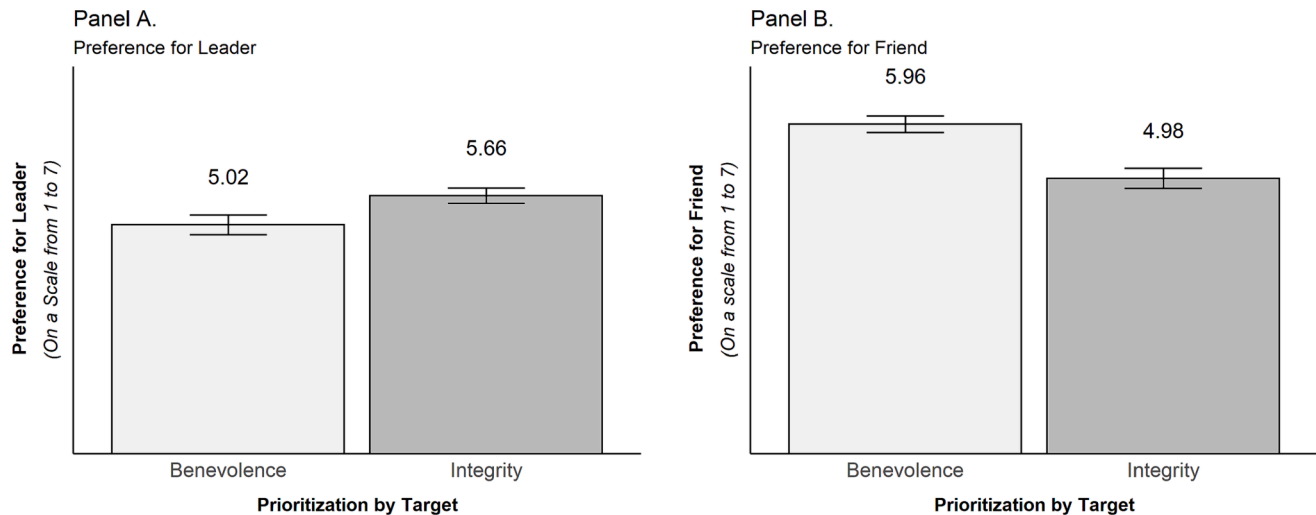
Fig. 3. Preference for a Leader and a Friend in Study 2, Based whether the Target Prioritized Benevolence or Integrity in an Ethical Dilemma (*N* = 200) *Note.* Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

To confirm that we manipulated the expression of benevolence or integrity, we conducted a pilot study in which we recruited participants on Amazon Mechanical Turk (*N* = 100) to rate the perceived benevolence and integrity of the author of the essays. Participants rated the author of the benevolent essay as much higher in benevolence ($F(1, 98) = 33.08, p < .001$) and lower in integrity ($F(1, 98) = 2266, p < .001$) than they rated the author of the high-integrity essay. We provide further details of this pilot in SOM 2.3.

4.2. Dependent Variables.

Leadership selection. After participants had read their purported partner's essay, we conducted the leadership selection task (Bitterly et al., 2017; Halevy et al., 2012). We did not tell participants about the leadership selection task until after they had exchanged essays. That is, when participants wrote and read their essays they were not anticipating the leadership selection task and the essays did not reflect anyone's desire to be leader. To convey the idea that their choice of leader was consequential, we informed participants that they would take part in a competitive group exercise for a $50 prize, and that the target who authored the essay they received would be in their group, as well as some other participants in the room. Each group would select a group

leader who would "focus and direct the team on a goal and be in charge of making decisions regarding the tasks each member completes and the payments they receive." After participants read about this group task, we instructed them to read the materials (including the essay response) carefully and rate the extent to which they would like the target to be the leader in the group exercise. We told participants that the group member who received the highest rating would be their leader. Participants indicated the extent to which they would like the target who authored the essay to lead their group in the group task (1: "Not at all", 9: "Definitely").

Participants believed that they were rating another participant in the room and that their ratings would directly influence the likelihood that this person would be selected to be the group leader. This was a consequential decision because the group leaders were responsible for making decisions that would impact the tasks and rewards they would experience. Though this selection task is different from real-world elections in that participants expressed a degree of preference rather than a binary choice (e.g., a vote), these ratings were consequential and enabled us to use a measure that is more sensitive than a binary choice. After participants completed this measure, we asked them to complete several attitudinal measures: participants rated the target's benevolence, integrity, and rated their preference for the target as a leader and

preference for the target as a friend.

Preference for a leader. We used four items to measure preference for a leader, consistent with prior research (α = 0.91; Hogg et al., 1998; Schaumberg & Flynn, 2012): "I would choose this person to be a leader in my organization," "This person has the qualities that would make him a good leader," "This person has clear leadership potential," and "This person would make a good supervisor or boss." These items were anchored at 1 = "Strongly disagree" and 7 = "Strongly agree."

Preference for a friend. We adapted the "preference for a leader" measure to create a parallel measure of preference for a friend. This scale consisted of the following four items (α = 0.90): "I would choose to work closely with this person in my organization," "This person has the qualities that would make him a good friend," "This person has clear friendship potential," and "This person would make a good friend." These items were anchored at 1 = "Strongly disagree" and 7 = "Strongly agree." Additional measures are reported in SOM 2.4.

Manipulation checks: perceived benevolence and integrity. We used five items to measure perceived integrity (α = 0.89): honest, fair, principled, high in integrity, just; and we used four items to measure perceived benevolence (α = 0.95): empathic, compassionate, caring, and benevolent. These items were anchored at 1 = "Not at all" and 7 = "A lot."

At the end of the study, we collected demographic information and asked participants if they had ever taken part in a group leadership selection task like the one employed in this study.

4.3. Results

We report analyses for all 203 participants who completed at least part of the study. We conducted two-way ANOVAs on all dependent variables, using Gender and Decision as factors but report our effects collapsed across gender, as previously discussed. We report all descriptive statistics for Study 2 in Table 2.

Perceived Benevolence and Integrity. Consistent with the intent of our manipulation, participants rated the target who had allocated more of the bonus to the colleague with the sick child as higher in benevolence, $F(1, 198) = 168.07$, $p <.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.46$, 95% CI = [0.36, 0.54], and lower in integrity, $F(1, 198) = 46.23$, $p <.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.19$, 95% CI = [0.10, 0.28], than the target who had allocated the bonus equally.

Leadership Selection. Participants allocated more leadership points to the high-integrity target than the benevolent target, $F(1, 201) = 19.52$, $p <.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.09$, 95% CI = [0.03, 0.17].

Preference for a Leader. Participants rated high-integrity targets as better potential leaders than benevolent targets, $F(1, 198) = 20.19$, $p <.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.09$, 95% CI = [0.03, 0.17]. We depict these results in Fig. 3, Panel A.

Preference for a Friend. The opposite pattern emerged for friendship; participants rated benevolent targets as better potential friends than high-integrity targets, $F(1, 198) = 66.76$, $p <.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.25$, 95% CI = [0.15, 0.35]. We depict these results in Fig. 3, Panel B.

4.4. Discussion

In Study 2, participants preferred benevolent friends (relationships that typically exist within small groups and are characterized by closeness and equality) and high-integrity leaders (relationships that typically exist within larger groups and are characterized by distance and hierarchy). We replicate these results in a supplemental study that uses another benevolence-integrity dilemma involving disclosure (see Study S3 in SOM 3.3).

5. Study 3

In Study 3, we extend our investigation by considering how prioritizing benevolence or integrity influences preferences for partners in a multi-party negotiation. In this study, we examine how individuals select negotiation allies and leaders after learning whether a target is benevolent or high-integrity. In doing so, we test our theoretical framework in a broader set of relationships, beyond friends and leaders. Notably, potential allies in a negotiation may not be emotionally close, but these relationships are often dyadic and are more equal than relationships between a negotiation leader and a group member. Informed by our theoretical framework, and our findings in Studies 1 and 2, we expected participants to more likely prefer benevolent (versus high-integrity) allies relative to benevolent leaders. We preregistered this study on AsPredicted.org (https://aspredicted.org/blind.php?x=g4ek4r).

5.1. Method

Participants. We recruited 113 MBA students from a midwestern business school in the United States who were participating in a group negotiation as part of a negotiations class. Although we did not collect demographic information in this study, the course included 38% females and 62% males.

Procedure and Materials. The study involved two stages. In the first stage, participants read about benevolence-integrity dilemmas and indicated how they would resolve them. To acquaint participants with these dilemmas, we defined benevolence and integrity and provided them with an illustrative vignette.

The dilemma we presented was similar to the opening example; a manager had to make a decision to either attend to the needs of a struggling employee and violate an impartial principle of fairness or follow an impartial principle of fairness and not attend to the needs of a struggling employee. We explained that helping the struggling employee reflected benevolence, whereas following a principle of fairness reflected integrity. (The vignette is presented in Appendix C). While this vignette was more complex than the explanation of benevolence-integrity dilemmas we used in Study 1, we replicated the results of Study 1 using this vignette, suggesting that it imparts the same understanding of these dilemmas in participants as simpler descriptions of dilemmas (see Study S1 in SOM 3.1 for details).

After reading about benevolence and integrity, participants answered the following question: "Consider how you behave - or how you would be most likely to behave (if you have not faced such decisions at work, yet) - when facing these types of decisions. Think about how you would actually behave (not necessarily how you think you should or how others do behave). Now, please finish the sentence below by selecting a response: I would resolve dilemmas like these by…" (7-point Likert scale, 1 = "Entirely relying on Benevolence," 2 = "Relying much more on Benevolence than Integrity," 3 = "Relying a little more on Benevolence than Integrity," 4 = "Relying equally on Benevolence and Integrity," 5 = "Relying a little more on Integrity than Benevolence," 6 = "Relying much more on Integrity than Benevolence," 7 = "Entirely relying on Integrity"). Participants answered this question in the second week of the academic quarter. We collected these data for the second stage of the experiment. With these data, we provided participants with information about the distribution of how their classmates would resolve the benevolence-integrity dilemmas. We did not use the data we collected in this stage in our analyses (as specified in our preregistration).

In the second stage of the experiment, which we administered during

Table 3
Participant Concerns Regarding Mistreatment in Study 3.

| | Mean | SD | Comparison Between Leaders and Allies | | | Percent Selecting Benevolence or Integrity | | |
			t	Df	p	B	Equal	I
Worse Treatment								
Leaders	2.55	1.21	4.73	112	<0.001	55.75%	19.47%	24.78%
Allies	3.23	1.09				25.66%	26.55%	47.79%
Average	2.89	1.2				40.71%	23.01%	36.29%

| | Mean | SD | Comparison with Scale Midpoint | | | B | Equal | I |
			t	Df	p			
Potential for Misconduct	1.73	0.91	14.84	112	<0.001	86.73%	7.08%	6.19%
Protecting Interests	3.27	1.25	2.34	112	0.021	30.97%	17.70%	51.33%

Note. Means of all results are on a scale from 1 ("Definitely a person who favors benevolence") to 5 ("Definitely a person who favors integrity") as well as percentage of participants selecting benevolence (1 or 2), integrity (4 or 5), or equal (3) on the scale. We report t-tests for the potential for misconduct and protecting interests with the scale center point of 3. All significant p-values are reported in italics.
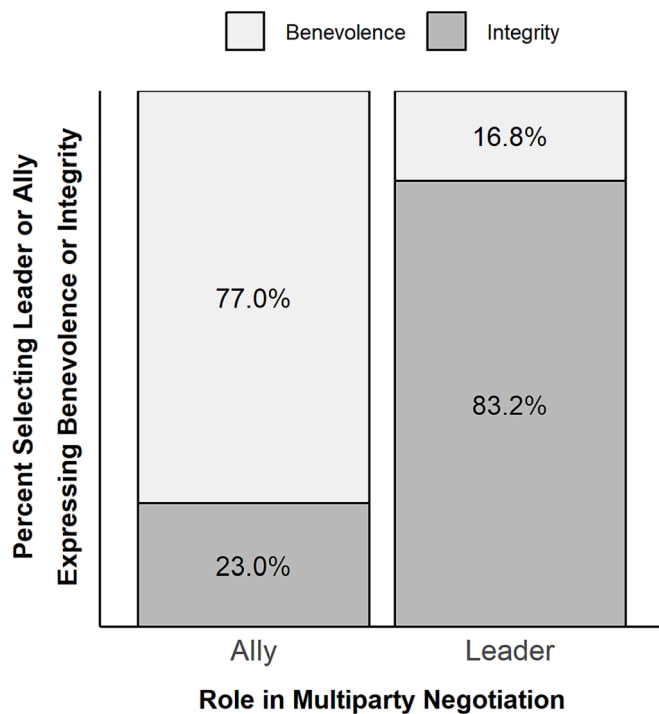
Fig. 4. Preference for Benevolent and High-Integrity Allies and Leaders in Study 3 ($N = 113$) *Note.* After learning that a potential partner had privileged benevolence or integrity, participants rated their preference for this partner as a leader or an ally.

the fifth week of the academic quarter, participants responded to a survey while preparing to engage in a six-party negotiation. When participants completed the survey, they had not yet been assigned to teams or learned the specific details of the negotiation. As a result, the specific features of the negotiation could not impact our results. All participants knew at this stage of the experiment was that there was an upcoming multi-party negotiation in which some people would be assigned to roles that involved leadership responsibilities and that other people would be assigned to roles that involved forming alliances.

At the start of the survey, we informed participants that we would ask them to answer questions about their classmates' suitability as a leader and suitability as an ally based on their responses to the

benevolence-integrity dilemmas (as indicated by their responses to the initial questionnaire that they had completed three weeks before this focal survey). Specifically, we reminded participants of the definitions of benevolence and integrity and showed them the distribution of their fellow classmates' responses to the initial questionnaire in the form of a histogram. We explained to participants that "a person who favors integrity" is someone who had indicated on the initial questionnaire that they relied a little more, much more, or entirely on integrity, whereas "a person who favors benevolence" indicated that they relied a little more, much more, or entirely on benevolence.

We then told participants that the "LEADER of the negotiation will be responsible for setting procedures and procuring offers in the multi-party negotiation" and that "people in the ALLY roles will have the opportunity to identify alliances and support each other's agendas." At this stage of the study, participants did not have specific information about the negotiation context, so they made decisions solely based on these descriptions. Participants responded to questions about both the leadership and ally roles, and we use a 2-cell (leader vs. ally), within-subjects design to analyze these results.

We informed participants that their answers to the role suitability questions would be used to determine who would be assigned to the leader and ally roles in their upcoming negotiations. Therefore, these measures incentivized participants to incorporate their true preferences into their answers.

Dependent Variables. Our primary dependent variable was participants' choice of whether a benevolent or high-integrity partner should be in the leadership or ally role in their team for the upcoming negotiation. We asked participants who they thought was better suited for a leadership role in a future team negotiation followed by the same question for an ally role. In both questions, we gave participants a binary choice between "a person who favors integrity" and "a person who favors benevolence."

In addition, we collected four exploratory measures to investigate potential mechanisms that underly the integrity-leadership link and the benevolence-ally link. First, we measured the extent to which actors would be concerned that a benevolent (vs. high-integrity) leader (ally) would treat them worse than others. Specifically, we asked for both potential leaders and allies: "If they were in a LEADERSHIP [ALLY] role, who would cause you to feel more concerned about whether they would treat you worse than others?" This item captures the extent to which participants were concerned that an ally or leader would subject them to relative mistreatment – for example, by prioritizing the suggestions of one team member more than the suggestions of the participant.

We also asked participants whether they were more concerned about potential misconduct by a leader who favors benevolence or integrity,

and whether they were more concerned about having their interests protected by an ally who favors benevolence or integrity. All four items were anchored at 1 = "Definitely a person who favors Benevolence" and 5 = "Definitely a person who favors Integrity" with "Equal" as a midpoint.

5.2. Results

We report analyses for all 113 participants who completed at least part of the study. We report descriptive statistics for our exploratory measures in Table 3.

Suitability as Leader and Ally. Supporting our thesis, most participants (83.2%) preferred high-integrity leaders to benevolent leaders, and most participants preferred benevolent allies to high-integrity allies (77.0%). To account for the non-independence of observations collected from the same participant, we ran a McNemar's test to determine whether there was a significant difference in proportions. The difference between these proportions was significant, $\chi^2(1, N = 113) = 48.79$, $p < .001$. We depict these results in Fig. 4.

Concern about Worse Treatment. We used a paired-samples t-test to compare how much participants were concerned about worse treatment from benevolent leaders versus allies. Consistent with our theorizing, participants were concerned that benevolent leaders, compared to benevolent allies, would be more likely to treat them worse, $t(112) = 4.73$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.59$, 95% CI = [0.32, 0.86].

We do not, however, find significant evidence that concerns about being treated worse mediates our basic effect. We ran a within-subjects mediation analysis (using MEMORE package in SPSS) with Ally vs. Leader as the independent variable, Choice of benevolent vs. high-integrity partner as the dependent variable, and concern about worse treatment as the mediator. The 95% CI around the indirect effect of concern about worse treatment included zero, [-0.01, 0.03].

Concern about Ally Protecting Interests. We only asked this question about allies, so we compared participants' answers to the midpoint of the bipolar scale (3) to descriptively analyze whether participants were more concerned about allies who favored benevolence or allies who favored integrity protecting their interests. The midpoint indicated that a participant was equally concerned about a benevolent and high-integrity ally. Participants' mean rating on the bipolar scale was significantly greater than the midpoint ($M = 3.27$, $SD = 1.25$), $t(112) = 2.34$, $p = .021$, $d = 0.22$, 95% CI = [-0.15, 0.59][4], indicating that participants were more concerned that high-integrity allies would not look out for their interests, relative to benevolent allies.

Concern about Potential Misconduct by Leaders. We only asked this question about leaders, so we compared participants' answers to the midpoint (3) of the bipolar scale regarding their concern about potential misconduct. Participants' mean rating on the bipolar scale was significantly less than the midpoint ($M = 1.73$, $SD = 0.91$), $t(112) = -14.84$, $p < .001$, $d = -1.40$, 95% CI = [-1.81, -0.98], indicating that participants were more concerned about potential misconduct from a benevolent leader relative to a high-integrity leader.

5.3. Discussion

Participants preferred high-integrity leaders to benevolent leaders and benevolent allies to high-integrity allies.. Consistent with our three-factor framework, these results provide further evidence that preferences for benevolent (versus high-integrity) partners vary according to the structure of the relationship. Ally relationships, like friendships, are

typically more equal and exist within smaller groups than leader-–follower relationships, but they are not necessarily characterized by closeness.

Participants were significantly more concerned about unequal treatment from a benevolent leader than they were from a benevolent ally. Unexpectedly, however, participants' concern about unequal treatment was not a significant mediator of a potential partner's role (leader versus ally) and the likelihood of selecting a benevolent (versus high-integrity) partner. It is possible that the dichotomous nature of our dependent variable, combined with the modest sample size of this study, meant that we lacked sufficient statistical power to detect mediation by concern about unequal treatment. We explore this potential mechanism further in Study 4.

6. Study 4

In Studies 4 and 5, we extend our investigation into two of the three factors of the SCH model. In Study 4, we extend our investigation to focus on how emotional closeness influences preferences for benevolent and high-integrity partners. In Study 5, we focus on group-size.

In our three-factor SCH model, closeness impacts an actor's preference for a partner by changing the risk of being neglected. When relationships are close, actors prefer benevolent partners because close partners are likely to be aware of and attentive to their needs. When partners are distant, actors prefer high-integrity partners, because distant partners are less prone to inadvertently neglect them in favor of other partners with whom they are closer.

In this study, we manipulate how close a potential leader is with *others* in the group. We expect that when leaders have close relationships with others, actors will be particularly likely to prefer high-integrity leaders. We postulate that when leaders have close relationships with others in a group, actors will seek to curb the risk that they will be neglected relative to their peers. Having a high-integrity leader mitigates this risk. We preregistered this study on AsPredicted.org (https://aspredicted.org/blind.php?x=i5ui2u).

6.1. Method

Participants. We recruited 200 undergraduates (71.4% female; mean age = 20) from two universities in the United States. We recruited most of the participants (189) from a university in the northeastern U.S. and an additional 11 from a university in the midwestern U.S. to reach our preregistered target of two hundred participants.

Study Design. We randomly assigned participants to one of two conditions from a 2-cell (Presence of friend: Leader has a friend in the group [Friend condition] vs. Leader has no friend in the group [No Friend condition]) between-subjects design. That is, we manipulated whether or not the target had a friend in the group. Participants knew that they would be involved in a group decision-making task and that they needed to choose a leader.

The study involved three stages. In the first stage, participants arrived in groups of between five and twenty and indicated on a sheet of paper which of the other participants in the room were friends. In the second stage, participants read about benevolence-integrity dilemmas and indicated their preference for benevolence or integrity in resolving a dilemma. We used the same materials as those we used in Study 3. These two stages of the experiment enhanced the realism of the third stage.

In the third stage, we informed participants that they had been placed in a group with current or past participants and would be participating in a decision task in which they could earn bonuses based on decisions that they and other group members made. We informed participants that two people from each group would be selected as

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[4] Since the standard deviation used to calculate in Cohen's d is not unbiased, confidence intervals around d may not accurately reflect effect sizes. Since the 95% CI in this case crossed 0 despite significance at the 0.05 level, we decided to recalculate the 95% CI in this instance with a bootstrapped standard deviation. With this procedure we have a 95% CI of [0.20, 0.24].

Table 4
Impact of Presence of Leader's Friend in the Group on Preferences for Integrity and Concerns about Mistreatment (Study 4, *N* = 200).

	Conditions						Comparison of Friend and No Friend Conditions		
	Friend		No Friend		Average				
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	t	df	p
Preference for High-integrity Leader	7.12	2.44	5.62	2.66	6.38	2.66	4.16	195.84	*<0.001*
Concern about unequal treatment	2.11	0.90	2.68	1.13	2.39	1.06	3.91	187.16	*<0.001*
Concern about misconduct	1.99	0.74	2.19	0.92	2.09	0.84	1.70	187.70	0.090

Note. We assessed preferences for the high-integrity target on a scale of 1 (lowest preference) to 10 (highest preference). Participants rated concern about unequal treatment and misconduct on a 5-point scale (1: "Definitely a person who favors Benevolence", 5: "Definitely a person who favors Integrity.") We report all significant p-values in italics.
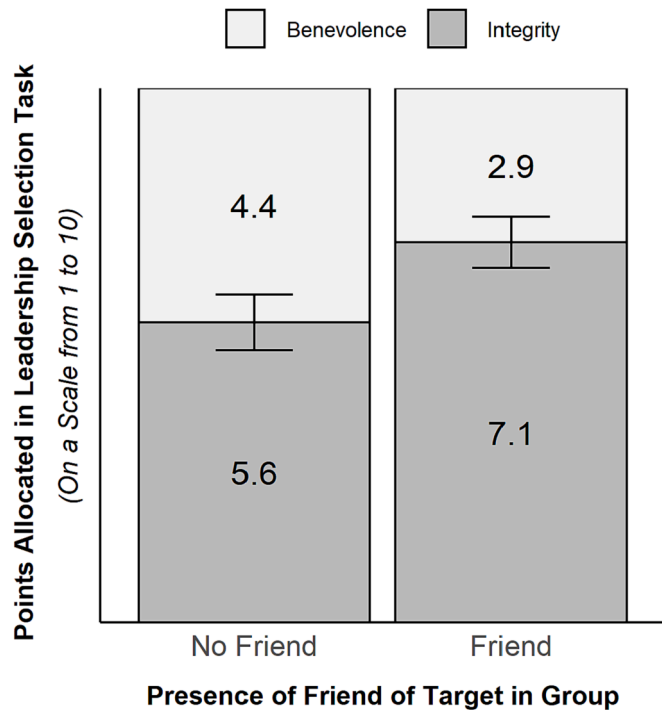
Fig. 5. Preference for Benevolent or High-Integrity Leaders Based on Presence of a Leader's Friend in the Group in Study 4 (*N* = 200) *Note.* Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

leadership candidates, and that those not selected as leadership candidates would pick the group leader.[5]

Next, participants read about the "Social Dilemma Game" (adapted from the Trust Game (Berg et al., 1995) and referred to as a "Group Game" in the study materials). This game made the choice of the leader consequential for participants (Exact materials are available in SOM 1.2).

In the Social Dilemma Game, each group member started with $2 that they could either keep or pass to the group leader. They could pass fractional amounts, and any amount they passed would be tripled. Participants could also type a message to the leader requesting that the leader return money to them. The ability to send messages created a sense that personal appeals or individual circumstances might sway a leader (see SOM 2.7 for examples). We informed participants that the leader would learn who was in their group, receive money, read messages they received, and then distribute the total amount of money to people in the group in any way that the leader wanted. Leaders could not keep any of the money for themselves.

After reading the rules of the Social Dilemma Game, we informed each participant that they had been selected to be a team member, not the group leader candidate. We then asked each participant to express a preference for one of two targets: Candidate A and Candidate B. We gave participants two pieces of information about each target: whether they had any friends in the group (based on their responses in the first stage of the study) and how they had resolved the benevolence-integrity dilemmas (based on each candidate's response to the survey about Benevolence and Integrity within the second stage of the study). In both conditions, participants read that there was a high-integrity target ("relying much more on integrity") and a benevolent target ("relying much more on benevolence"). In the Friend condition, both targets had a friend in the group. In the No Friend condition, neither target had a friend in the group.

Dependent variables. After reading about both targets, we asked participants to indicate their preference for each target using a leadership selection task similar to the one we used in Study 2. Specifically, participants answered the question "How strongly do you prefer Candidate A or Candidate B" by allocating ten points between the targets. We informed participants that the target with the highest average number of points would be appointed leader of the group.

In addition, to investigate the underlying mechanism, we asked participants which of the two targets would cause them greater concern about being treated worse than others (1: "Definitely Candidate A", 3: "Equal", 5: "Definitely Candidate B"), consistent with our theorizing. To examine whether actors generally believe that high-integrity targets are more ethical, we also measured how concerned participants were that the targets would engage in misconduct more broadly (1: "Definitely Candidate A", 3: "Equal", 5: "Definitely Candidate B", for both questions).

We then asked participants to indicate the sum of money they would contribute to the leader. We did not preregister the amount contributed as a dependent variable, because we expected this sum to be contingent on other aspects of the study like participants' confidence in the effectiveness of their messages to leaders. However, for completeness, we report information about the amounts participants contributed in Study 4 in SOM 2.9.

At the end of the study, we collected demographic information. After

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[5] One potential concern with our manipulation in this study is experimenter demand. In addition to providing information about the potential leaders' prioritization of benevolence or integrity, we also explicitly stated that candidates were not the participant's friend. By sharing this information, we may have made concerns about impartiality (favoritism towards the leader's friend, rather than the participant) particularly salient. Importantly, however, none of our materials indicated the direction of our hypothesis about how closeness might affect preferences for leaders who privilege benevolence or integrity. In addition, it is very likely that individuals know about existing friendships within a group, and that these relationships are likely to be very salient, when groups form in the workplace and beyond. As a result, our manipulation may mirror real-world domains and reflect strong preferences for leaders who exhibit integrity when they have friends in the group.

completing the study, we paid participants a bonus payment based upon their contribution and the actions of a leader. We determined bonuses using the choices of 7 participants who played the role of "leader" in a pilot study.

6.2. Results

We report analyses for all 200 study participants (71.4% female; mean age = 20). Consistent with our pre-registration, we conducted between-condition t-tests to compare the Friend versus No Friend conditions for both leader preference and our mechanism measures. We report all descriptive statistics for this study other than those for contribution to the leader in Table 4. For simplicity, we report our results without controlling for the university at which the data was collected. When we do control for university using a regression analysis, we found no significant differences in our results.

Leaders Selection. Supporting our theory, participants were more likely to prefer a high-integrity leader over a benevolent leader when the leader had a friend in the group. Specifically, participants allocated more points to the high-integrity leader than they did to the benevolent leader when the leader had a friend in the group than when the leader had no friends in the group, $t(195.84) = 4.16$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.59$, 95% CI = [0.30, 0.88]. We depict these results in Fig. 5.

Concern about Unequal Treatment. Consistent with our theorizing, participants were less concerned that a high-integrity leader who prioritized integrity (versus benevolence) would treat them relatively worse in the Friend condition than in the No Friend condition, $t(187.16)$ = 3.91, $p < .001$, $d = 0.56$, 95% CI = [0.27, 0.84].
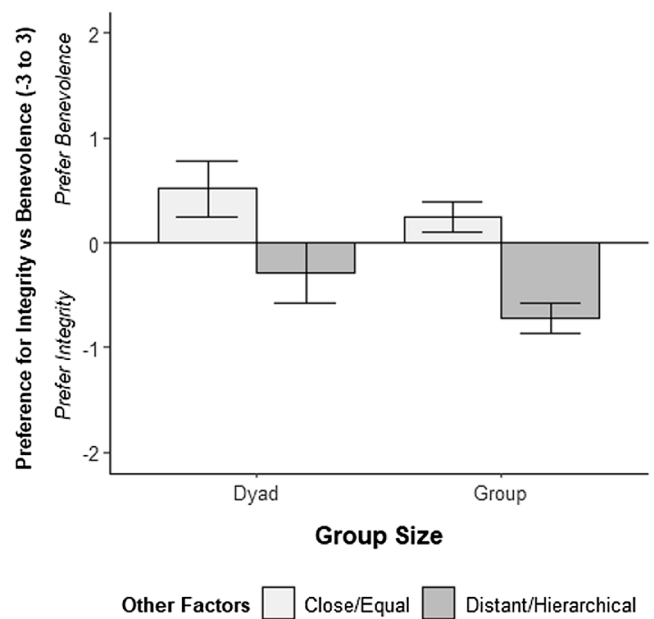
Concern about Misconduct. Participants were slightly, but not significantly, more concerned that benevolent leaders would engage in misconduct in the Friend condition than in the No Friend condition, $t(187.70) = 1.70$, $p = .090$, $d = 0.24$, 95% CI = [-0.04, 0.52].

Mediation Analyses. We conducted mediation analyses using the bootstrap procedure with 10,000 samples (Hayes, 2013 PROCESS Macro for SPSS, Model 4) to explore the process by which closeness with other group members influences trust in high-integrity (versus benevolent) leaders. Our mediation model included Closeness (1 = Friends with others in group, 0 = Not friends with others in group) as the independent variable, Concern about Unequal Treatment as the mediator variable, and points allocated to the high-integrity leader (over the benevolent leader) as the dependent variable. We find evidence of significant mediation through Concern about Unequal Treatment (Indirect Effect = 0.519, SE = 0.156, 95% CI = [0.262, 0.887]). The indirect effect remains

Fig. 6. Preference for Benevolence or Integrity in a Partner by Dyad vs Group in Study 5 (*N* = 1004) *Note.* Participants rated their preference for a partner that prioritized benevolence or integrity for relationships that varied by Emotional Closeness, Group Size, and Hierarchy. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

significant when we also add Concern about Misconduct as a potential mediator in the model (Indirect Effect = 0.482, SE = 0.149, 95% CI = [0.241, 0.841]), but we find no evidence of mediation through Concern about Misconduct (Indirect Effect = 0.093, SE = 0.080, 95% CI = [-0.006, 0.321]).

6.3. Discussion

In this study, we manipulate emotional closeness (a component in our three-factor framework) holding other factors constant. We focused on closeness in this study because it is a highly salient feature of many relationships that is particularly relevant to benevolence-integrity dilemmas. Consistent with our theorizing, participants expressed a stronger preference for high-integrity leaders over benevolent leaders when the leader had a friend in the group (versus when the leader did not have a friend in the group). This preference was driven by concerns about unequal treatment. Actors expect that benevolent leaders are more likely to attend to the needs and desires of close others. Therefore, when a benevolent leader is close to some members of a group, distant group members fear they will receive unequal treatment. In contrast, a high-integrity leader can be expected to attend to all group members equally.

7. Study 5

In Study 5, we directly examine a second factor of our three-factor framework: group size. Consistent with the SCH model, we predicted that actors would be more likely to prefer high-integrity (versus benevolent) partners as relationships involve more people. From our existing studies, however, it is unclear whether this preference reflects a discrete jump when we contrast dyads and group of three or more, or if the preference for a high-integrity partner continues to rise as group size increases. We examine this question in Study 5 by measuring preferences for high-integrity (versus benevolent) partners in dyads and groups that include three, five, and ten people.

Table 5
Descriptive Statistics by Condition in Study 5 (*N* = 1004).

Group Size	Closeness and Hierarchy Level	N	Preference (+is more Benevolence)	
			Mean	SD
Dyad	Close and Equal	126	0.52	1.54
	Distant and Hierarchical	125	−0.29	1.67
	Across Factors	251	0.12	1.65
3	Close and Equal	126	0.43	1.40
	Distant and Hierarchical	125	−0.73	1.47
	Across Factors	251	−0.15	1.55
5	Close and Equal	125	0.24	1.48
	Distant and Hierarchical	125	−0.79	1.49
	Across Factors	250	−0.28	1.57
10	Close and Equal	126	0.09	1.41
	Distant and Hierarchical	126	−0.63	1.43
	Across Factors	252	−0.27	1.46
Group	Close and Equal	377	0.25	1.43
	Distant and Hierarchical	376	−0.72	1.46
	Across Factors	753	−0.23	1.53

Note. In the group size column, the "Group" level aggregates data across all groups (size of 3, 5, and 10) that are not in the "Dyad" condition. Participants responded on a scale from −3 (integrity) to + 3 (benevolence).

We study the role of group size across two different types of relationships: close, equal relationships and distant, hierarchical relationships. We chose these two types of relationships because they characterize friends and leaders, respectively. Studying these two sets of relationships provides another test of the friend-leader differences we identify in Studies 1 and 2. Studying different types of relationships also provides a more robust test of how group size affects partner preferences. We preregistered this study on AsPredicted.org (https://aspredicted.org/VYV_GG5).

7.1. Method

Participants. We recruited 1004 adults (50% female; mean age = 40) in the United States and United Kingdom from Prolific Academic.

Study Design and Procedure. We randomly assigned participants to a condition from a 4 (Group Size: 2 vs. 3 vs. 5 vs. 10) X 2 (Closeness and Hierarchy: {Close and Equal} vs. {Distant and Hierarchical}) between-subjects design.

The procedure for this study was very similar to the procedure we used in Study 1, but in this study participants only answered questions in one condition. As in Study 1, we defined benevolence and integrity, described a benevolence-integrity dilemma (using the scenario in Studies 3 and 4), and included a comprehension check to ensure that participants understood these constructs. We then described a workplace relationship and asked participants to rate whether they would prefer a benevolent or high-integrity partner for that relationship. After indicating their preferences, we asked participants demographic questions before we debriefed them. The descriptions that we used for the relationships were the same as those we describe in Table 1 except that we added additional information about the size of the group.

Dependent variables. Participants answered the same prompt using the same scale that they used in Study 1. Specifically, we asked participants, "How strongly do you prefer a person in this role that relies on benevolence vs. integrity?" They responded to this question on a 7-point scale (-3 = "Strongly prefer integrity," 0 = "Prefer benevolence and integrity equally," 3 = "Strongly prefer benevolence").

7.2. Results

We report analyses for all 1004 participants who completed the study. In Table 5, we include the descriptive statistics for each of our cells.

We conducted two sets of analyses. Based on pilot tests and Study S8 (SOM 3.8) that identified a robust difference between dyads and three-person groups, we ran a set of preregistered regressions that compared dyads to groups of any size. This distinction is consistent with theoretical work that suggests dyads are unique (Liden et al., 2016). Second, we ran a set of exploratory analyses that use group size as a continuous variable, to examine how relationship preferences change as group size grows.

Preregistered comparison between dyads and groups. We ran a regression with participant preferences for a benevolent vs. high-integrity partner as the dependent variable and two independent variables. The Group Size variable was a mean-centered dummy variable which was positive for dyads and negative for all other group sizes. The closeness and hierarchy variable was a mean centered dummy variable which was positive for Close and Equal relationships and negative for Distant and Hierarchical ones. For completeness, we also included their interaction. However, we find no evidence of significant interactions (*p* =.444), and therefore, we do not discuss interactions further.

Consistent with our theorizing, we find a significant effect for group size. Participants preferred benevolent partners in dyads more than they did in groups, *b* = 0.347, *t*(1000) = 3.196, *p* =.001. In line with our

previous studies, we also find that participants prefer benevolent partners in close, equal relationships more than they do in distant, hierarchical relationships, *b* = 0.930, *t*(1000) = 9.896, *p* <.001. We present these results in Fig. 6.

Exploratory analysis examining group size as a continuous measure. In a second set of analyses, we substitute the binary measure of group-size for a continuous one. We find that increasing group size is significantly associated with an increased preference for high-integrity partners, *b* = -0.037, *t*(1000) = -2.434, *p* =.017. In this analysis, we also find that participants prefer benevolent partners more in close, equal relationships than in distant, hierarchical relationships, *b* = 1.076, *t*(1000) = 5.996, *p* <.001.

Overall, these results suggest that participants increasingly prefer high-integrity partners over benevolent partners as group size increases, and that participants have a particularly strong preference for benevolence (vs. integrity) in dyads. Furthermore, these results provide additional evidence that actors are more likely to prefer benevolence (versus integrity) in relationships that are more characteristic of friendships than leader–follower relationships.

7.3. Discussion

In this study, we investigate group size. Supporting our theoretical framework, participants increasingly prefer high-integrity partners as group size increases. Further, we find that the shift in preferences for integrity versus benevolence is most pronounced when actors compare dyads to groups of any size, consistent with past work showing that expectations for partners in dyads differ from those in groups (Liden et al., 2016; Shaw et al., 2017).

8. General Discussion

We develop and test a three-factor framework (the SCH Model) to explain how group size, emotional closeness, and hierarchy influence concerns about relative mistreatment, and consequently preferences for benevolent versus high-integrity partners. When relationships are equal, emotionally close, and take place in small groups or dyads, actors are more likely to prefer benevolent partners to high-integrity partners. When relationships are hierarchical (and the partner has higher power), emotionally distant, and take place in large groups, actors are more likely to prefer high-integrity partners.

We document these preferences across 5 experiments and 8 supplemental studies (see SOM 3). In Study 1, we find that each of the three factors of the SCH Model influence preferences for benevolence and integrity across a broad set of relationships. In Study 2, we contrast preferences for friends and leaders, because these two relationship types are both extremely consequential types of relationships and reflect opposite ends of each dimension of our theoretical framework. Participants were more likely prefer benevolent friends over high-integrity friends and high-integrity leaders over benevolent leaders. We replicate this key result in five supplemental studies using different methodological approaches (see Studies S2 through S7 in the SOM).

In Study 3, we extend our investigation to a new domain and compare preferences for allies and leaders within a negotiation context. Comparing allies and leaders allows us to examine a different set of relationships that typically vary on group size and hierarchy, but not necessarily closeness. Consistent with our theoretical framework, in Study 3 we find that actors are more likely to prefer benevolent (versus high-integrity) allies than they are to prefer benevolent (versus high-integrity) leaders.

In Study 4, we directly examine the role of closeness. Participants

who were distant from a potential leader expressed a stronger preference for high-integrity (versus benevolent) leaders when the leader had a friend in the group than when the leader did not have a friend in the group. Further, we find that concern about unequal treatment by benevolent leaders (vs. high-integrity leaders) underlies this preference for integrity. Finally, in Study 5, we manipulate group size and show that actors are more likely to prefer high-integrity partners as group size increases, and that the shift in preferences for integrity versus benevolence is most pronounced when actors compare dyads to groups of any size. We replicate these results using a behavioral measure in Study S8 (SOM 3.8).

Our findings have broad theoretical implications. First, our work develops our understanding of how key structural features of relationships influence moral preferences. Although existing work has identified benevolence and integrity as fundamental moral values that people care about when evaluating others, no prior work has considered when, and in what relationships, people care more or less about each of these values. Integrating research on moral psychology, evolutionary psychology, sociology, and organizational behavior, we identify three relational factors (group Size, Closeness, and Hierarchy) that uniquely influence concerns about relative mistreatment, and consequently influence preferences for benevolent versus high-integrity partners. By identifying the critical role that self-interested concerns about *relative* mistreatment have on our moral and relationship preferences, we bridge dyadic, partner-choice, and intergroup perspectives on moral psychology.

Our findings also resolve existing puzzles in the person perception and morality literature. For example, our findings explain why people who expose illegal and unethical behaviors within an organization (privileging integrity over benevolence) gain respect from the public, but lose favor among close friends (Dungan et al., 2015). Similarly, our findings explain why people who harm others in order to adhere to broader principles are penalized in personal relationships (and in general), but are favored in high-stakes leadership positions (Uhlmann et al., 2013). In both of these cases, existing frameworks for understanding interpersonal perceptions of individuals who exhibit moral values cannot explain why the same behavior alternately helps and harms interpersonal perceptions. The SCH Model explains these differences by underscoring the critical role of the relational context in understanding how ethical choices influence preferences for partners. Further, our findings identify an important aspect of person perception. When assessing a potential partner, actors evaluate potential partners not merely as a function of whether or not they engage in ethical behavior, but also of how they resolve ethical dilemmas that cause them to privilege one moral principle over another.

Our findings are also practically important. Past work has broadly encouraged individuals to project moral values, without regard to how individuals might resolve conflicts between moral values. Our findings reveal that when seeking leadership positions, people should deliberately and publicly exhibit integrity, and when forging friendships, people should be particularly mindful to project benevolence. More broadly, our findings explicate how people should consider the nature of their relationship as they resolve moral dilemmas and prioritize one moral value over another. This may be particularly important for new and emerging leaders who need to navigate changing preferences in their partners.

9. Limitations and future directions

Our three-factor framework offers a generative foundation for understanding relationships. In our investigation, we explored several different types of relationships, but primarily focused on leaders, friends, and allies. We believe, however, that future work should extend our investigation in several important ways.

9.1. Additional relational dimensions

First, scholars should examine a broader set of relationships and consider other relational dimensions that may influence preferences for benevolence and integrity. Although we focus our theory on relationship features that influence concerns about relative mistreatment, other features may influence preferences for benevolence and integrity through other mechanisms. For example, our studies focus on preferences for forming relationships with benevolent and high-integrity partners who have greater power, but future research should also examine preferences for partners with less power (e.g., subordinates). It is possible that people will appreciate loyalty (which is more consistent with benevolence) from lower power partners, because having loyal followers is advantageous for leaders.

Although we examine how preferences for benevolent versus high-integrity partners differ across a range of group sizes (spanning two-person dyads to ten-person groups), future work could consider how even larger groups or broad network structures influence these preferences. In networks characterized by low embeddedness, for example, actors may have stronger preferences for high-integrity partners because they are more uncertain about the behavior of their network partners (Uzzi, 1997). The degree to which actors expect their partners to have shared goals or aligned incentives may also influence preferences for benevolence versus integrity.

Future work should explore whether preferences for benevolence and integrity change when actors are considering forming new relationships with strangers (as studied in the present work) versus evaluating existing partners (as has been studied in past work; e.g., Colquitt et al., 2007; Mayer & Davis, 1999; Murray & Holmes, 2009). Two supplemental studies (see Studies S6 and S7 in SOM 3.6 and 3.7) suggest that our results may extend to existing relationships. Specifically, we find similar results to those in the main manuscript when participants consider how much they would trust current partners (rather than their interest in forming new relationships). However, more work is needed to understand these dynamics within existing relationships, given research on adult attachment (e.g., Murray et al., 2006; Murray & Holmes, 2009) suggesting that actors in existing emotionally close relationships may be particularly concerned that benevolent partners will treat others better than they will treat them.

9.2. Different participant populations

Second, future work should examine preferences for benevolence and integrity across relationships outside of the cultural context of the United States. The expectations of leaders and friends differs across cultures (Dorfman et al., 1997; González et al., 2004; Triandis et al., 1988), and preferences for benevolence and integrity may also differ. For example, people from Western cultures tend to rely on analytical thinking which is often rule-based, abstract, and divorced from context, whereas people from other cultures may rely more on holistic thought which is associative, experiential, and reliant on context (Henrich et al., 2010; Nisbett et al., 2001; Norenzayan et al., 2007). In addition, within individualist cultures, people tend to be less sensitive to relational obligations than people within collectivist cultures (Oyserman et al., 1998). These differences may inform a preference for benevolent or high-integrity partners. Integrity, with a focus on abstract rules may align better with the analytic thought styles typically associated with western cultures, whereas benevolence, with a focus on partners and the obligations created within specific context, may align more readily with the holistic thought-styles typically associated with eastern cultures (Graham et al., 2009). As organizations increasingly straddle cultural boundaries, we call for future work to examine how preferences for partners is impacted by the interaction between relationship structures and a hierarchy of values.

9.3. Different methodological choices

Finally, we note the limitations of our methodological choices. Although our experimental approach afforded us a high level of control to identify causal relationships and examine relative preferences for benevolence and integrity, there are many nuances to explore. In particular, we acknowledge that in addition to relative preferences, absolute preferences for benevolence and integrity are also likely to matter. Our theory is about the perceived risk of relative mistreatment. We assert that people are likely to value benevolent partners to the extent that they believe benevolence will be directed towards them. However, people value high-integrity partners, when they are concerned that benevolence will be directed towards others (and they will be relatively neglected). These predictions hold when considering tradeoffs in mid-range and high levels of benevolence and integrity. It is possible that preferences for partners who *lack* benevolence versus lack integrity (i.e., tradeoffs in low levels of benevolence and integrity) are different. In particular, it seems plausible that at low ends of these values, benevolence always matters more than integrity, regardless of the relationship. That is, actors may be more fearful of, and more likely to reject partners whom they perceive to be malevolent (relative to those who they perceive as lacking integrity) because malevolent partners are a greater threat to actors' self-interest. Future research could examine how these absolute levels of benevolence and integrity impact preferences for forming relationships.

We also call for future work to develop the SCH framework to explore interactions between size, closeness, and hierarchy. In additional analyses of Study 1 (in SOM 2.2), we find that participants' relative preference for high-integrity over benevolent partners is greater in distant (vs. close) relationships that are equal (vs. hierarchical; i.e., an interaction between emotional closeness and hierarchy). Furthermore, participants' relative preferences for high-integrity over benevolent partners for larger (vs. smaller) groups is greater in hierarchical (vs. equal) relationships, suggesting a potential interaction between group size and hierarchy. However, additional work is needed to test these interactions more systematically, with greater power. By examining interactions, future work can develop predictions about preferences for benevolent and high-integrity partners across a wider range of relationships that may be characterized by different combinations of size, closeness, and hierarchy. Future research could also use more bottom-up methodologies such as latent profile analysis (see Gabriel et al., 2018) to identify how our three factors combine within organizations to influence preferences for benevolence and integrity in different roles.

10. Conclusion

People want their partners to be moral. In many cases, however, ethical dilemmas require people to privilege one moral value over another. Our findings describe how preferences for benevolent and high-integrity partners systematically shift across different types of relationships. As relationships involve more people, are more emotionally distant, and are characterized by greater hierarchy, actors prefer high-integrity partners over benevolent partners. But as relationships involve fewer people, are emotionally closer, and are characterized more by equality, actors prefer benevolent partners over high-integrity partners. These findings establish how concerns about relative mistreatment influence relationship preferences, and highlight how the same moral values can be rewarded in some relationships but penalized in others.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Alexander K. Moore: Conceptualization, Investigation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing, Project administration. **Joshua Lewis:** Conceptualization, Investigation, Writing – review & editing. **Emma E. Levine:** Conceptualization, Investigation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing, Supervision. **Maurice E. Schweitzer:** Conceptualization, Investigation, Writing – review & editing, Supervision.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Data availability

All code and materials are available on OSF

Acknowledgments

Appendix A

Study 1 Prompt.
Please read this section carefully, as you will be asked some questions about it on the next page.
Many common ethical dilemmas involve a tradeoff between benevolence and integrity.
Benevolence entails wanting to help or do good to other people; whereas integrity entails adhering to universal principles in an impartial manner.
Benevolence and Integrity can conflict in the workplace. For example, professionals frequently face situations in which they have to choose to either help someone (prioritize benevolence) or apply rules or principles in a fair, impartial manner (prioritize integrity). These situations, for example, can arise when allocating rewards, punishments, and tasks.
We're interested in how you evaluate people in different workplace roles, based on whether they prioritize benevolence or integrity when resolving the type of dilemmas you just read about.
In the following questions, we are going to show you some different workplace roles, along with a definition of that role, and ask you whether you prefer a person that relies on benevolence or relies on integrity in that role.

Appendix B

These two essays reflected either benevolence or integrity in Study 2. In the Benevolence condition (Fig. B1a), the target allocated more of the bonus to a colleague with a sick child. In the Integrity condition (Fig. B1b), the target allocated the bonus equally across all ten team members. In both conditions, the essay provided a brief explanation of the decision.

Writing Exercise _____ Number/Letter: 2D

The purpose of this study is to explore different workplace dilemmas.

Imagine you are an employee in a medium sized sales company.

You were recently asked to manage a team that participated in a company-wide sales competition. Your team won the sales competition, and was awarded a large bonus. You are responsible for allocating the bonus across your 10 team members. Managers typically allocate the bonus equally to their team members.

You must decide how to allocate the bonus. You know that a child of one of your employees was recently hospitalized and the family is experiencing financial hardship and would significantly benefit from a higher bonus payment. The whole team knows about this as well, but it is not clear whether your teammates sympathize with this employee.

How would you allocate the bonus and why?

Write in enough detail so that a person reading this essay could understand your thought process. This essay may be shared with other lab participants. You will have five minutes to write this essay.

Gender: Male / Female   **Age:** 21

> i would allocate a higher bonus to the employee in financial hardship. Every employee should get help if they need it. At the end of the day, i believe that it would hurt the employee in need if they did not receive an extra bonus given their situation. A manager has to take care of their employees so that nobody is unhappy or suffering. The manager's job is to keep the team motivated and performing well, knowing they will be taken care of. There are many other ways to reward people equally but this is not the way to do it. If i split the bonus across everyone, the person in need would suffer and no longer work as hard, so i would give this employee extra bonus.

Fig. B1a. Example Stimulus for the *Benevolence* Condition in Study 2 *Note:* Participants in the *Benevolence* condition received an essay that stated that they would help an individual in need. The gender of the target was manipulated by circling the word "male" or "female" above the response.

Writing Exercise   Number/Letter: 2C

The purpose of this study is to explore different workplace dilemmas.

Imagine you are an employee in a medium sized sales company.

You were recently asked to manage a team that participated in a company-wide sales competition. Your team won the sales competition, and was awarded a large bonus. You are responsible for allocating the bonus across your 10 team members. Managers typically allocate the bonus equally to their team members.

You must decide how to allocate the bonus. You know that a child of one of your employees was recently hospitalized and the family is experiencing financial hardship and would significantly benefit from a higher bonus payment. The whole team knows about this as well, but it is not clear whether your teammates sympathize with this employee.

How would you allocate the bonus and why?

Write in enough detail so that a person reading this essay could understand your thought process. This essay may be shared with other lab participants. You will have five minutes to write this essay.

Gender: Male / Female   **Age:** 21

> I would allocate the bonus equally across the 10 team members. Every employee contributed equally to earn the bonus. At the end of the day, I believe that it would be unfair to the other employees to give away some of their bonus given that they worked very hard and truly earned it. A manager has to treat every equally so that nobody is disadvantaged or privileged. The managers job is to keep the team motivated and performing well, knowing they will be rewarded fairly. There are many other ways to help that employee, but this is not the way to do it. if i allocated more of the bonus to one employee, the others would see this as being unfair and no longer work as hard, so i would still split the bonus equally to the team.

Fig. B1b. Example Stimulus for the *Integrity* Condition in Study 2 *Note*. Participants in the *Integrity* condition received an essay from a target that stated that they would allocate a bonus equally. The gender of the target was manipulated by circling the word "male" or "female" above the response.

Appendix C

Consider the following scenario, which illustrates the dilemma between benevolence and integrity:

Over the course of a few weeks, a manager notices that one of her sales associates and good friend, Tom, has been struggling at work. Until recently, Tom had been one of the top performers in the office, but lately the quality of his work has slipped, and he has missed several deadlines. The manager discusses this with Tom, and as a friend, Tom admits that his young daughter had severe health problems that necessitate unexpected trips to the hospital. He also explains that things have stabilized and should get back to normal soon. Tom mentions that he hopes he will still be considered for a promotion, because a pay raise could really help him pay his daughter's hospital bills.

The manager is about to make promotion decisions. The company has a promotion policy which dictates that the top associate in each office within a given year is promoted. While Tom was the top-performing associate for much of the year, his recent dip in performance has caused him to lose the spot to another employee. While assessing the situation, the manager wonders whether she should promote Tom or leave him in his current position.

The manager knows that Tom would benefit from the pay raise, and if his situation truly stabilizes, he will likely excel in the position. However, Tom is technically not the top performer, and she worries that promoting Tom anyway would be unfair to other employees.

The manager in the situation above, faces a dilemma. Does she follow the company policy and pass over Tom for the promotion, or does she promote Tom?

In this case, **the benevolent action** would be for the manager to promote Tom.

Alternately, **the high integrity action** would be to promote the associate based on the company rules that she is expected to uphold as a manager.

Appendix D. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at https://doi.org/10.1016/j.obhdp.2023.104252.

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