



A desire for deviance: The influence of leader normativeness and inter-group competition on group member support



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HIGHLIGHTS

- We examine when and why extreme leaders are preferred to normative leaders.
- Groups preferred extreme leaders in highly competitive inter-group contexts.
- Preference for extreme leaders is driven by need for inter-group differentiation.
- We show that pro-normative deviance is sometimes more appealing than normativeness.

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ABSTRACT

Group members typically prefer leaders who have characteristics or attitudes that are in line with group norms (i.e., are normative). In this paper, we explore the possibility that in highly competitive inter-group contexts, group members prefer leaders who can more effectively differentiate the in-group from out-groups, leading to a preference for leaders with more extreme attitudes that are in line with group norms (i.e., pro-normative). In three experiments conducted in an election context in the United States, we find that both Democrats' and Republicans' preference for an extreme leader increases under conditions of high inter-group competition. Results indicate that participants' heightened need to differentiate their political party from the competing party drives this effect, and that this effect is stronger for those who identify strongly with their political party. Implications for group members' responses to in-group deviance and leadership support are discussed.

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Introduction

From its beginning, polls suggested that the 2012 U.S. Presidential election would be a close race (Borek, 2012). In such competitive electoral contests, political scientists and economists suggest that candidates and parties should move to the center of the ideological spectrum, or “play to the middle,” to attract moderates and centrists (Black, 1948; Downs, 1957). Yet, it seems clear that this strategy was not one that appealed to either party's base during the 2012 U.S. Presidential campaign; rather than moderation, elements within both parties appeared to actively push for extremism from their respective presidential candidates. For example, liberal commentators urged President Obama to more explicitly articulate and champion liberal principles and goals, arguing that he needed to fight harder for progressive priorities (Peoples, 2012). The Republican nominee, Mitt Romney, was similarly criticized by conservatives, who said that he was not conservative enough

(Zengerle, 2012), perhaps leading him to choose a running mate known for ideological extremism (Camia, 2012). These desires could have arguably come at the cost of losing centrist and independent voters. Given the potential cost to such a strategy, we ask, when and why might this preference for leader extremism occur?

In this paper, we suggest that leaders whose attitudes and positions are extreme in the direction of group norms (i.e., pro-normative, henceforth called extreme) can be perceived to more clearly convey the in-group's distinct qualities and values than leaders who are more in line with group norms (i.e., normative, Abrams, Marques, Bown, & Henson, 2000). Thus, extreme leaders may be more appealing to group members when their desire is to differentiate the in-group from relevant out-groups. We explore one context where such inter-group differentiation desires are especially heightened: when inter-group competition is high.

Different types of in-group deviants

Group norms provide information about behaviors and attitudes that are typical and expected of group members (Cialdini, Reno, &

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Kallgren, 1990; Prentice & Miller, 1996), and serve to establish group identity and distinguish groups from one another (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). In general, group members whose attitudes are in line with group norms elicit favorable evaluations, whereas those who do not follow group norms, or deviants, are responded to negatively (Levine, 1989; Marques & Páez, 1994; Turner et al., 1987).

Importantly, not all deviants are the same; the literature has identified different types of in-group deviants based on the direction of their divergence from group norms. Most lay discussions of deviance focus on anti-normative deviants, or those who deviate in a direction away from group norms and towards those of out-groups. However, there also exist pro-normative deviants, who deviate in an extreme direction in line with group norms and away from those of out-groups (Abrams et al., 2000; Morrison & Miller, 2008). The antipathy to deviance that has been documented thus far is reserved for anti-normative deviants. In contrast, pro-normative deviants are generally seen more positively than anti-normative deviants, and sometimes as positively as normative group members (Abrams et al., 2000).

As an example of anti-normative deviants and extreme group members, consider the attitudes of the Republican Party in the United States on the issue of abortion. The average Republican's attitude is pro-life (or anti-abortion), but with conditions, such as when the mother's life is at risk (Kliff, 2012), whereas the average Democrat tends to be pro-choice (Democratic National Platform, 2012). Thus, a pro-choice Republican would be an anti-normative deviant within the Republican Party because his/her attitude diverges from the Republican Party norm and is close to the norm of an out-group, the Democratic Party. In contrast, a Republican who is opposed to abortion under any circumstances would be an extreme group member. And, consistent with prior work on responses to in-group deviants (Abrams et al., 2000; Marques & Páez, 1994), pro-choice Republicans are indeed marginalized within the Republican Party, whereas pro-life extremists are not (Lapidus, 2012).

Group needs and evaluations of in-group deviants

The findings referenced above, in which extreme group members are seen more positively than anti-normative deviants, are understood to occur because of group members' desire to ensure that their group identity is distinct from those of relevant out-groups (Abrams et al., 2000; Marques & Páez, 1994). That is, anti-normative deviants are evaluated negatively because their attitudes' proximity to out-group norms reduces the clarity of the difference between the in-group identity and that of the out-group. In contrast, extreme members are seen more positively than anti-normative deviants and sometimes as positively as normative members because extreme group members' distance from out-group norms enhance, rather than hinder, the achievement of the goal of in-group distinctiveness.

In this paper, we argue that there are situations in which extreme group members will be celebrated precisely for their difference from out-groups, to the point that they will be preferred even to normative group members. Specifically, we propose that when inter-group differentiation is especially desired by group members, in-group extremists will be seen as more effective at fulfilling such needs, and therefore will be evaluated and responded to more positively than normative members. Our prediction that extremity will be preferred to normativeness runs counter to prior work, which has found that extreme and normative group members are equally accepted by group members (Abrams, de Moura, Marques, & Hutchison, 2008; Abrams et al., 2000). However, the underlying mechanism driving our predicted effects – that group members who successfully fulfill group needs will enjoy greater in-group support – is consistent with research showing that situational concerns can prompt group members to prefer some forms of normativeness over others (Dovidio, Gaertner, & Validzic, 1998; Mummendey & Wenzel, 1999). For example, when situations call for cooperation with an out-group, anti-normative deviants are viewed most positively because their proximity to the out-group is seen as

potentially helpful to the group in achieving its goals (Teixeira, Demoulin, & Yzerbyt, 2011). In the present case, we argue that when the situation calls for inter-group differentiation, extreme group members will be seen as more effective at fulfilling those needs, and therefore responded to more positively, than normative members.

Self-categorization theory (Turner et al., 1987) also predicts that group members will sometimes view extreme group members more positively than normative members. Central to this account is the idea that group members are attracted to prototypical in-group members, who are seen as typical and exemplary of the in-group (Hogg & Terry, 2000; Turner et al., 1987). Thus, in-group extremists will be evaluated positively to the extent that they are perceived to be group prototypical. Importantly, prototypicality is not the same as normativeness; rather, one's group prototypicality is perceived in a given social context and is reflected in the meta-contrast ratio, which is the ratio of the difference between the in-group and out-groups to the differences among in-group members (Turner et al., 1987). Because different situations can shift group members' perceptions of inter- and intra-group differences, the prototypicality of a given group member is not static across all situations. For example, social categorization theory predicts that the existence of a salient out-group will influence group members' perceptions of extreme members such that they are seen as more prototypical, and evaluated more positively, than they would have been if the out-group were not salient (Hogg, Hains, & Mason, 1998; Turner et al., 1987).

In contrast to the prototypicality argument offered by self-categorization theory, we propose that there are situations in which extreme group members will be preferred to normative members because of their extremity, and not because of their perceived prototypicality. We argue that when the situation heightens inter-group differentiation goals (Jetten, Spears, & Postmes, 2004; Scheepers, Spears, Doosje, & Manstead, 2003), extreme members will be seen as most effective at fulfilling these goals because they are the most different from the out-group and will therefore be preferred. That is, the preference for extreme group members will occur not because group members' perceptions of the prototypicality of an extreme group member have changed, but because group members will actively seek out extremism.

Inter-group competition and support for extreme leaders

One context where inter-group differentiation needs are particularly salient is in the presence of heightened inter-group competition; when inter-group competition is high, group members seek to maximize inter-group differences more than when inter-group competition is low or absent (Hamilton, Sherman, & Lickel, 1998; Scheepers, Spears, Doosje, & Manstead, 2002, 2006; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). This desire for inter-group differentiation has been shown to manifest itself in a variety of behavioral and attitudinal strategies designed to maximize inter-group differences, including derogation of the out-group (Scheepers et al., 2003), perceiving the in-group to be better than the out-group (Tajfel, Billig, Bundy, & Flament, 1971), and allocating more resources to the in-group than to the out-group (Brewer, 1979).

Group members can also address this increased need for inter-group differentiation through intra-group processes. For example, group members can derogate or reject in-group members who reduce the difference between the in-group and out-groups, such as anti-normative deviants (Marques, Abrams, Páez, & Martínez-Taboada, 1998; Marques, Abrams, & Serôdio, 2001). Importantly, as group members' needs to differentiate their group from out-groups increase, so too does the tendency to derogate anti-normative deviants (Jetten, Summerville, Hornsey, & Mewse, 2005; Marques et al., 2001). In a similar way, we focus on in-group support of extreme group members as an avenue that group members can take to address the increased desire for inter-group differentiation, and propose that support for extreme group members will increase as group members' need for inter-group differentiation increases.

Although our discussion to this point has largely centered on group members' evaluation of and response to equal-status peers, we expect

that the predicted pattern will extend to group members' evaluation of and support for their leaders. Group members expect their leaders to serve many functions, and their support is greater when these expectations are fulfilled (Bass, 2008). Since one common goal that groups have is to preserve group norms and maintain the group's identity (Festinger, 1950), it is not surprising that group members usually favor prototypical leaders (Hogg, 2001; Hogg & van Knippenberg, 2003). However, it is our contention that when inter-group contexts heighten group members' inter-group differentiation needs, such as when competition with out-groups is high, the desire for leaders who can better address such needs effectively – extreme leaders – should also increase, potentially leading them to be preferred to normative leaders.

Overview of research

We conducted three studies to explore when and why group members support extreme leaders, and focused specifically on the effect of inter-group competition. We propose that group members' needs for inter-group differentiation are higher when inter-group competition is perceived to be high, and that their heightened inter-group differentiation needs subsequently lead them to view extreme leaders as better able to address such needs than normative leaders, resulting in a preference for extreme leaders. Our theoretical model is depicted in Fig. 1.

To test these predictions, we examined how American citizens from the two principal political parties – Republican and Democratic – responded to normative, extreme, and anti-normative leaders in the context of competitive electoral contests. In Study 1, we tested whether Democratic participants' preference for an extreme leader over a normative leader increased when a primary election was described as competitive, as compared to when it was described as less competitive. Study 2 asked Democratic and Republican participants to indicate their perceptions of and support for their respective party's Presidential candidate in the 2012 election, who was portrayed as either ideologically extreme or ideologically moderate, while also varying the perceived competitiveness of the electoral contest. In addition to seeking to replicate Study 1's main premise that group members prefer extreme leaders to normative ones under high competition, Study 2 also explored whether participants perceived the extreme candidate to be more effective at fulfilling their group identity needs than the normative candidate when the electoral contest was described as highly competitive. Finally, Study 3 directly tested the mechanism behind participants' preference for extreme leaders in a highly competitive inter-group context. To do this, we asked Democratic and Republican participants to consider the 2016 Presidential election, which was predicted to be either highly competitive or less competitive. We then assessed their need for differentiation between the two political parties before asking them to report their willingness to support a hypothetical candidate, who was either ideologically extreme or ideologically moderate, in order to examine whether participants' preference for the extreme candidate over the normative candidate was affected by their desire for inter-group differentiation. In Study 3, we also explored the potential role of participants' identification with their political party in this relationship.

Study 1

Study 1 was conducted in the context of a hypothetical primary election in the United States. In the U.S., a primary election is designed to narrow the field of candidates from within a party before a general election for office against the candidate chosen by the opposing party. We predicted that when the inter-group context is highly competitive, participants will be more likely to vote for an extreme leader than when the inter-group context is less competitive.

Method

Participants and design

Participants were recruited from a private Mid-Atlantic university-maintained online participant pool for a study concerning political attitudes. Recruitment materials were explicit that participants should be affiliated with the Democratic Party. A total of 61 self-identified Democrats (29 women, $M_{\text{age}} = 31.82$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 12.69$) completed an online survey in exchange for entering into a drawing for a \$25 online gift card. Study 1 employed a 2 (Inter-group competition: High vs. Low) \times 3 (Leader normativeness: Normative vs. Extreme vs. Anti-normative) mixed design, with the former as a between-participant factor and the latter as a within-participant factor.

Procedure

Participants were told that the study was about people's political attitudes. Before seeing the actual content of the study, participants had to identify their political party affiliation, and were able to proceed to the study only if they indicated that they were affiliated with the Democratic Party.

After giving consent, participants were asked to imagine that there was an upcoming primary for their voting district's representative position. Profiles of three candidates for the primary were provided, which included ratings of each candidate's adherence to party positions. These ratings varied in terms of each candidate's adherence to the party platform and reflected the normativeness of each candidate. After reading all three profiles, participants were asked to indicate the candidate for whom they would vote.

Manipulations and measure

Inter-group competition manipulation. We manipulated the degree of inter-group competition by inducing a sense of uncertainty about the Democratic Party's chance of winning the district's general election. Participants in the *High Competition* condition read, "Imagine that you live in a swing district that is heavily contested by Republicans and Democrats." Participants in the *Low Competition* condition read, "Imagine that you live in a Democratic stronghold that has rarely, if ever, been represented by a Republican."

All participants then read, "Your district is currently represented by a Democrat who is retiring. Thus, this year, your district has three potential

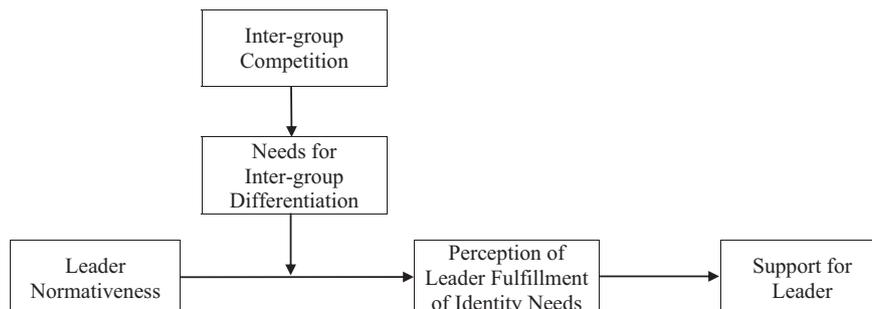


Fig. 1. Overall theoretical model.

primary candidates for the Democratic party that you need to decide between.”

Leader normativeness manipulation. After reading about the competitiveness of their district, participants were then told that each of the primary candidates had been rated by a third-party political analysis organization on their adherence to party lines. Our manipulation of candidate normativeness was embedded in this rating information.

Specifically, the *Normative* candidate was described as, “This candidate is rated 93%, meaning that he would be expected to vote along party lines 93% of the time. The times that he would not vote with the party, he would be expected to split evenly between voting in a more liberal or more conservative direction.” The *Extreme* candidate was described as, “This candidate is rated at 65%, meaning that he would be expected to vote along party lines 65% of the time. The times that he would not vote with the party, he would be expected to vote in an even more extreme liberal direction.” In contrast, the *Anti-normative* candidate was described as follows: “This candidate is rated 67%, meaning that he would be expected to vote along party lines 67% of the time. The times that he would not vote with the party, he would be expected to vote in a more conservative direction.” The ratings and descriptions of all three candidates for the primary were presented in randomized order.

Leader choice. After reading about all three candidates, participants indicated which candidate they would vote for in the primary.

Results and discussion

Participant age and gender did not moderate any of the observed effects in this or any of the following studies, and are therefore not discussed further.

We expected that participants would prefer the *Extreme* candidate to the *Normative* candidate in the *High Competition* condition, but not in the *Low Competition* condition. As predicted, participants' voting decisions were significantly influenced by the inter-group competition manipulation, $\chi^2(df = 2) = 6.95, p = .031$, see Table 1. Specifically, whereas only 23.4% of the participants in the *Low Competition* condition voted for the *Extreme* candidate, a significantly greater percentage of participants chose the *Extreme* candidate in the *High Competition* condition (54.8%). The *Anti-normative* candidate was the least preferred in both conditions.

These results are consistent with our prediction that group members' preference for extreme leaders will depend on the competitiveness of the inter-group situation. Specifically, participants' preference for the extreme candidate was significantly higher when competition between the parties was high than when it was low. Also, consistent with previous research, the anti-normative candidate was the least preferred, regardless of the competitiveness of inter-group relations (Abrams et al., 2000; Levine, 1989; for exceptions, see Morton, Postmes, & Jetten, 2007; Teixeira et al., 2011).

There are several limitations to Study 1. First, the study included only Democratic participants. Second, the context was an abstract, hypothetical situation that might not generalize to real electoral choices. Thus, in Study 2, we recruited both Democratic and Republican participants, and

asked them about their support for their party's candidate shortly before a real election.

Study 2

We conducted Study 2 shortly before the 2012 Presidential election, and asked participants about their perceptions of and support for their party's candidate. We hypothesized that, irrespective of participants' party affiliation, an extreme version of the candidate would receive greater support than a normative version of the candidate when the electoral contest was perceived to be highly competitive. We additionally predicted that when the electoral contest was described as highly competitive, participants would perceive the extreme candidate to be more effective at fulfilling their identity needs than the normative candidate, thus leading them to prefer the extreme candidate. Such a finding would be consistent with the possibility that heightened identity needs underlie participants' preference for the extreme candidate. Fig. 2 presents the statistical model tested in Study 2.

Besides recruiting both Democrats and Republicans and measuring participants' perceptions of the candidate, Study 2 differs from Study 1 in two additional aspects. First, we did not include an anti-normative leader because in Study 1, we did not find, nor is there theoretical precedent for, a differential preference for anti-normative leaders depending on the level of inter-group competition. Second, Study 2 employed a between-participants design in which participants viewed information about only one candidate and indicated their willingness to support him, rather than choosing among a number of candidates.

Method

Participants and design

Two hundred fifty-three U.S. citizens (130 Democrats and 123 Republicans, 115 women, $M_{age} = 33.04, SD_{age} = 11.93$) were recruited via Amazon's Mechanical Turk and paid \$0.50 for their participation. Study 2 employed a 2 (Inter-group competition: High vs. Low) \times 2 (Leader normativeness: Normative vs. Extreme) between-participants design and was conducted between May 27 and June 8, 2012.

Procedure

Two online experiments were set up for this study: one for Democrats and the other for Republicans. The studies were advertised as concerning political attitudes, and made explicit that participants should be affiliated with either the Democratic or the Republican Party. Upon entering the study website, participants had to identify their party affiliation, and could not proceed to the study materials unless they indicated that they were affiliated with the appropriate political party. Specifically, if participants indicated that they were affiliated with the Democratic Party (the Republican Party), they were directed to the experiment for Democrats (Republicans). If participants were affiliated with neither the Democratic nor the Republican Party (e.g., independents or Libertarians), they could not proceed with the study and were instead given an explanation as to why they were not eligible to participate.

After providing consent, participants were told that they would read information about the 2012 U.S. Presidential election, and that they should consider the predictions of political scientists who had successfully predicted the outcomes of previous elections. Our manipulations of inter-group competition and leader normativeness were embedded in these materials. Subsequently, participants indicated their support for their party's presidential candidate, and the extent to which they perceived that the candidate would fulfill their identity needs.

Manipulations and measures

Upon entering the study, all participants read the following:

We would like you to consider the results of recent social science research on the electoral process. A group of political scientists have

Table 1
Participant choice across inter-group competition conditions (Study 1).

	Extreme candidate	Normative candidate	Anti-normative candidate
Low inter-group competition	7 (23.4%)	19 (63.3%)	4 (13.3%)
High inter-group competition	17 (54.8%)	10 (32.3%)	4 (12.9%)

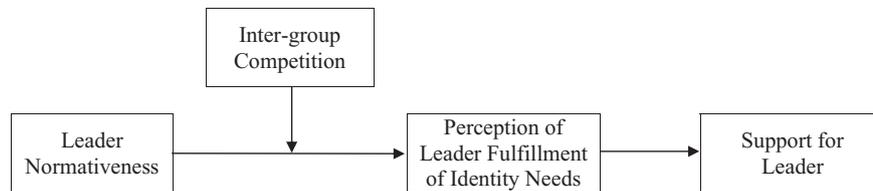


Fig. 2. Statistical model tested in Study 2.

developed a model predicting the outcome of the November 2012 presidential election. The model is based on a formula they developed from thorough analysis of the primary political, economic, and social factors that have affected every U.S. presidential election from 1960 to 1980. Based on their model, these political scientists have correctly forecasted the outcome of every election from 1984 through 2008. Due to the success of the model, they call the identified factors (e.g., macro trends in the economy and the society, and trends of independent voters), the 'keys to the Presidency.'

Participants then read about factors identified by the political scientists as being important for predicting the outcome of the presidential election.

Inter-group competition manipulation. For each participant, one factor was highlighted as being particularly important for predicting the election's outcomes, and participants were told that the factor indicated that the election would either be highly competitive or not. For realism, the highlighted factor varied depending on which experimental condition participants were in. For example, Democratic participants in the *Low Competition* condition read that "incumbent status has been shown to be fairly important. Thus, as the sitting president, the model predicts that President Obama's probability of winning the election is 87.2%, unless a significant change in economic, political, and social environments occurs." In contrast, Republican participants in the *Low Competition* condition were told that Congressional incumbent-party status was important, and thus, Mitt Romney was expected to win (see Table 2 for the full texts of our manipulations). In this way, participants were led to believe that the probability that their party's candidate would win was either high or low.

Leader normativeness manipulation. Following the inter-group competition manipulation, participants were given additional information about a standardized score that represented each presidential candidate's position, as compared to the average score of the party's Congressional members' positions. Participants were then given the score for their party's candidate, which indicated that the candidate was either normative or extreme.

In the *Normative* condition, Democratic [Republican] participants received the following information: "President Obama [Mitt Romney] was rated 0.399. This suggests that President Obama's [Mitt Romney's] positions are broadly in line with congressional Democrats [Republicans], since his score is very close to the average of theirs (0.382)." In the *Extreme* condition, Democratic [Republican] participants read, "President Obama [Mitt Romney] was rated 0.619. This suggests that President Obama's [Mitt Romney's] positions are more liberal [conservative] than congressional Democrats [Republicans], since his score is closer to 1 (extremely liberal [extremely conservative]) than the average of theirs (0.382)." Participants were also given pictorial representations of the candidate's score, relative to their party's congressional scores.

Manipulation checks. After reading the information about their candidate's position, participants indicated the likelihood that their candidate would win the election (1 = *extremely unlikely*, 7 = *extremely*

likely), and the extent to which he was liberal or conservative compared to their party's average congressional member (1 = *extremely liberal*, 7 = *extremely conservative* for Democratic participants, and 1 = *extremely conservative*, 7 = *extremely liberal* for Republican participants. These anchors were set so that lower scores indicate extremism).

Leader support. Participants then rated the extent to which they were willing to vote for the candidate, to support the candidate, and their willingness to volunteer to help the candidate's campaign (all scales anchored with 1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*, $\alpha = .81$).

Leader's fulfillment of identity needs. After rating their support for the candidate, we also asked participants to indicate the extent to which they expected the candidate to fulfill their identity needs. To do so, we used two items adapted from prior research (Scheepers et al., 2006). Specifically, participants were asked, "To what extent do you expect President Obama [Mitt Romney] to demonstrate what the Democratic [Republican] Party is about?" and "To what extent do you expect President Obama [Mitt Romney] to put the Democratic [Republican] Party in a positive light?" (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*, $\alpha = .86$).¹

Results

Means, standard deviations, and correlations among variables in Study 2 are presented in Table 3.

Manipulation checks²

To ensure that our manipulations worked as intended, we conducted two 2 (Party affiliation: Democratic vs. Republican) \times 2 (Inter-group competition: High vs. Low) \times 2 (Leader normativeness: Normative vs.

¹ We conducted a confirmatory factor analysis to explore whether participants distinguished our mediator variable (leaders' fulfillment of identity needs) and the dependent variable (leader support). The analysis revealed that the two factor model that separates our dependent variable and the mediator variable showed a significantly better fit with the data (χ^2 ($df = 4$) = 16.32, $p = .002$, Root-mean-square-error-of-approximation (RMSEA) = .11, Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI) = .97, Comparative Fit index (CFI) = .99) than the one-factor model, which collapsed the DV and the mediator variable (χ^2 ($df = 5$) = 120.15, $p < .001$, RMSEA = .30, GFI = .86, CFI = .86), and $\Delta\chi^2$ ($\Delta df = 1$) = 103.83, $p < .001$. These results suggest that the mediator and the dependent variable are empirically distinct.

² Participants also indicated the extent to which they believed the provided information by rating their agreement with two items: "I think the model's prediction is believable," and "As a portrayal of the Democrats [Republicans] and President Obama's [Mitt Romney's] political positions, these reports are credible" (both anchored with 1 = *strongly strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). Overall, participants believed the modeled predictions that we used to manipulate inter-group competition ($M = 4.89$, $SD = 1.45$), $t(252) = 9.76$, $p < .001$, compared with the scale midpoint. Participants also rated the comparison between their candidate and their party's congresspersons (i.e., our candidate normativeness manipulations) as credible ($M = 4.82$, $SD = 1.36$), $t(252) = 9.80$, $p < .001$, compared with the scale midpoint. These ratings were affected neither by participants' party affiliation, nor by our manipulated factors and their interaction. We also conducted analyses using two datasets with low-believing participants removed. In one set, we removed 59 participants (36 Republican and 23 Democratic participants) whose ratings of the believability items were below the midpoint of 4. In the second set, we removed seven participants, whose ratings were identified as outliers, based on an analysis of their studentized deleted residuals. In both sets of analyses, all of the results reported remained unchanged.

Table 2
Inter-group competition manipulation (Study 2).

	High inter-group competition	Low inter-group competition
Democratic participants	The incumbent-party mandate has been shown to be fairly important. Because the Democratic Party suffered losses in the 2010 mid-term elections, the model predicts that President Obama's probability of winning the election is 51.2%, unless a significant change in economic, political, and social environments occurs.	The incumbent status has been shown to be fairly important. Thus, as the sitting president, the model predicts that President Obama's probability of winning the election is 87.2%, unless a significant change in economic, political, and social environments occurs.
Republican participants	Macro-economic conditions have been shown to be fairly important. Thus, as the economy has neither suffered nor recovered sufficiently during President Obama's term, Mitt Romney's probability of winning the election is 51.2%, unless a significant change in economic, political, and social environments occurs.	The incumbent-party mandate has been shown to be fairly important. Because the Democratic Party suffered losses in the 2010 mid-term elections, Mitt Romney's probability of winning the election is 87.2%, unless a significant change in economic, political, and social environments occurs.

Extreme) analyses of variance (ANOVA) on participants' ratings of their candidate's likelihood of winning the election and on their perceptions of the candidate's position relative to their party. These analyses revealed that participants rated the candidate in the *Low Competition* condition as significantly more likely to win the election ($M = 5.91, SD = 1.05$) than the candidate in the *High Competition* condition ($M = 4.74, SD = .83$), $F(1, 245) = 94.31, p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 1.99$. In addition, relative to the average congressional members of the party, the *Extreme* candidate was rated as holding a significantly more extreme position ($M = 2.65, SD = 1.17$) than the *Normative* candidate ($M = 3.32, SD = .98$), $F(1, 245) = 27.01, p < .001$, Cohen's $d = .62$. In both analyses, no higher-order interactions were significant.

Leader support

Our primary hypothesis was that participants would be more willing to support an extreme candidate than a normative candidate when they perceived the election to be highly competitive. To test this hypothesis, we ran the above ANOVA on participants' support for the candidate. This analysis indicated a main effect of party affiliation, $F(1, 245) = 11.40, p < .001$, Cohen's $d = .42$, with Democratic participants significantly more willing to support President Obama ($M = 4.70, SD = 1.45$) than Republican participants were willing to support Mitt Romney ($M = 4.07, SD = 1.57$). Although unexpected, this result was understandable, since the Republican nomination had not been finalized at the time the study was conducted (but Mitt Romney was understood to be the presumptive nominee).

The analysis also revealed the predicted Leader normativeness \times Inter-group competition interaction, $F(1, 245) = 10.61, p = .001$ (see Fig. 3). Specifically, when inter-group competition was perceived to be high, participants were more willing to support the extreme version of the candidate ($M = 4.86, SD = 1.53$) than the normative version ($M = 3.99, SD = 1.51$), $t(245) = 3.26, p = .001$, Cohen's $d = .57$. However, when inter-group competition was perceived to be low, participants' willingness to support the extreme version of the candidate ($M = 4.14, SD = 1.56$) did not differ significantly from their willingness to support the normative version of the candidate ($M = 4.53, SD = 1.44$), $t(245) = -1.34, p = .18$. Moreover, participants were more willing to

support the extreme version of the candidate when competition was high than when competition was low, $t(245) = 2.75, p = .006$, Cohen's $d = .47$. Importantly, the three-way interaction was not significant, $F(1, 245) = 1.55, p = .22$, indicating that the effect did not differ across party affiliation.

Leader's fulfillment of identity needs

We expected that when inter-group competition was high, participants would perceive an extreme candidate to be more effective at fulfilling their identity needs than a normative candidate. To test this hypothesis, we ran the above ANOVA on the extent to which participants perceived the candidate to fulfill their identity needs. We again found a main effect of party affiliation, $F(1, 245) = 31.93, p < .001$, Cohen's $d = .70$, with Democratic participants rating President Obama as significantly more effective at fulfilling their identity needs ($M = 5.62, SD = .99$) than did Republican participants rating Mitt Romney ($M = 4.72, SD = 1.54$).

Importantly, we also found the predicted Leader normativeness \times Inter-group competition interaction, $F(1, 245) = 8.58, p = .004$ (see Fig. 4). In the *High Competition* condition, participants viewed an extreme candidate as significantly more effective at fulfilling their identity needs ($M = 5.57, SD = 1.10$) than a normative candidate ($M = 4.80, SD = 1.32$), $t(245) = 3.34, p = .002$, Cohen's $d = .64$, whereas in the *Low Competition* condition, an extreme candidate was perceived to be as equally effective at fulfilling participants' identity needs ($M = 5.06, SD = 1.53$) as a normative candidate ($M = 5.27, SD = 1.38$), $t(245) = .80, p = .42$. In addition, participants perceived an extreme candidate as significantly more effective at fulfilling their identity needs in the *High Competition* condition than in the *Low Competition* condition, $t(245) = 2.31, p = .022$, Cohen's $d = .38$.

Mediation analysis

We predicted that under high inter-group competition, group members would prefer an extreme leader to a normative leader because they

Table 3
Means, standard deviations, and correlations among study variables (Study 2).

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4
1. Party affiliation						
2. Inter-group competition			-.03			
3. Leader normativeness			.00	.02		
4. Leader fulfillment of identity needs	5.18	1.36	.33***	.01	.10	
5. Leader support	4.39	1.54	.21**	.03	.08	.62***

Note. $N = 253$. For party affiliation, Republicans were coded -1 and Democrats were coded 1 . For inter-group competition, low competition was coded -1 and high competition was coded 1 . For leader normativeness, normative leader was coded -1 and extreme leader was coded 1 .

** $p < .01$.
*** $p < .001$.

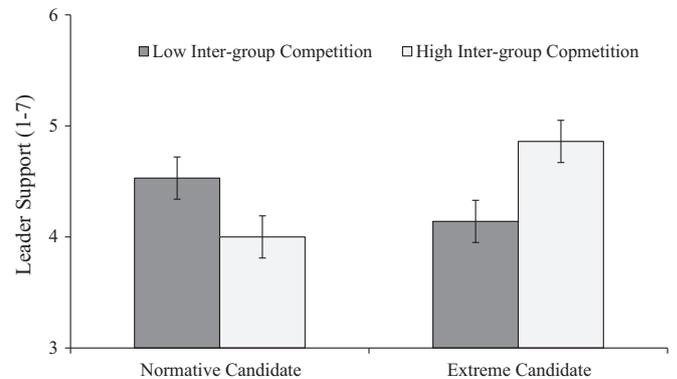


Fig. 3. Leader support as a function of leader normativeness and inter-group competition (Study 2). Error bars represent standard errors.

would view the extreme leader as more effective at fulfilling their identity needs than the normative leader. To test this prediction, we conducted a mediated moderation analysis (Baron & Kenny, 1986; Edwards & Lambert, 2007; Muller, Judd, & Yzerbyt, 2005) where we examined whether participants' perceptions of the candidate's effectiveness at fulfilling their identity needs would mediate the interactive effect of Leader normativeness and Inter-group competition on Leader support. To establish this mediated moderation, three conditions must be met: 1) the extreme version of the candidate is supported more than the normative version of the candidate in highly competitive contexts (a significant Leader normativeness \times Inter-group competition on Leader support), 2) the extreme candidate is perceived to be more effective at fulfilling participants' identity needs than the normative candidate in highly competitive contexts (a significant Leader normativeness \times Inter-group competition interaction on Leader fulfillment of identity needs), and 3) Leader fulfillment of identity needs significantly predict Leader support while controlling for the interactions between Leader normativeness and Inter-group competition and between Inter-group competition and Leader fulfillment of identity needs.

As described above and shown in Table 4, the first two conditions were met. The last condition was also met, in which Leader fulfillment of identity needs significantly predicted Leader support when controlling for the Leader normativeness \times Inter-group competition interaction and the Inter-group competition \times Leader fulfillment of identity needs interaction, $b = .69$, $SE = .06$, $p < .001$, while the previously significant Leader normativeness \times Inter-group competition interaction on Leader support dropped to non-significance, $b = .13$, $SE = .08$, $p = .10$ (see Column 3, Table 4). A Sobel test indicated that this decrease was statistically significant, $z = 3.08$, $p = .002$. Thus, participants' perceptions of the extreme leader's effectiveness at fulfilling their identity needs mediated the interactive effect of leader normativeness and inter-group competition on leader support.

Discussion

Study 2 provided further evidence that group members prefer an extreme leader to a normative leader when inter-group competition is perceived to be high. We also found that when competition is low, this differential preference disappears. This effect is driven by participants' perceptions of the extent to which the proffered candidate is seen as effectively fulfilling their inter-group differentiation needs; when competition is high, the extreme leader is seen as more effective at fulfilling the group's identity needs than the normative leader, therefore receiving greater support, whereas when competition is perceived to be low, extreme and normative leaders are perceived to be equally effective at addressing the group's identity needs, and are thus supported equally. These results are consistent with the possibility that inter-

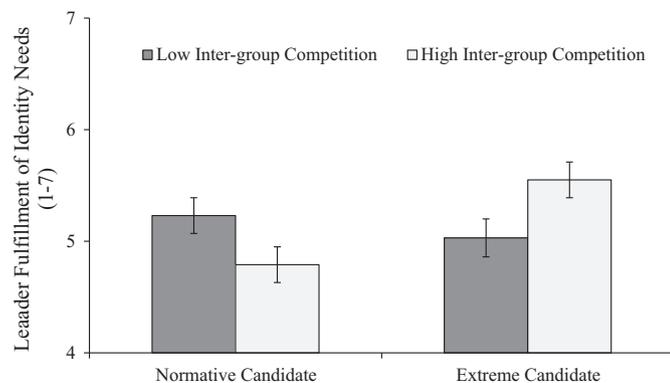


Fig. 4. Leader fulfillment of identity needs as a function of leader normativeness and inter-group competition (Study 2). Error bars represent standard errors.

group competition heightened participants' desires for inter-group differentiation, thus driving their support for an extreme leader.

Importantly, participants did not expect the extreme candidate to be more electable than the normative candidate, but were still more willing to support the former than the latter. This finding runs counter to the possibility that participants' preference for the candidate is driven simply by the candidate's electability (i.e., whoever is more likely to win the election). Instead, these results suggest that identity-related concerns (i.e., increasing inter-party differences) also play an important role in electoral decisions.

Our overarching argument is that competitive inter-group contexts increase group members' desire for inter-group differentiation. Because extreme leaders are more effective at differentiating the in-group from the out-group, group members perceive them as more capable of fulfilling their identity-differentiation needs and thus support them more than normative leaders when inter-group competition is high. To this point, we have provided evidence that inter-group competition affects the extent to which group members support extreme leaders, such that it 1) increases group members' preference for an extreme leader over a normative leader, and 2) leads group members to view the extreme leader as more effective at fulfilling their identity needs. However, we have not yet provided direct evidence that inter-group competition increases group members' inter-group differentiation needs, leading to greater support for an extreme leader. Study 3 was designed to provide evidence for this possibility.

Study 3

In Study 3, we tested the hypothesis that when group members desire to differentiate the in-group from a relevant out-group, such as when the competition with the out-group is perceived to be high, they will prefer extreme leaders to normative ones. To do so, we directly measured participants' need for inter-group differentiation after providing information about the competitiveness of the context, and tested its effect on support for an extreme candidate. This strategy is in contrast to our approach in Study 2, in which we inferred that participants had responded to heightened inter-group differentiation needs by perceiving an extreme candidate to be more effective at fulfilling their identity needs than a normative candidate.

In addition, we measured participants' identification with their political party in Study 3 to provide further evidence that the effect is driven by identity-related concerns. Prior work has shown that when the group's distinct identity is threatened, it is high-identifiers who seek inter-group differentiation (Jetten et al., 2004; Scheepers et al., 2003). Thus, we expected that heightened inter-group competition would increase the desire for inter-group differentiation primarily among participants who are highly identified with their political party.

Study 3 also differs from Study 2 in several other ways. First, we used a future presidential election as the study context and varied the normativeness of a hypothetical, rather than real, presidential candidate. We also measured perceptions of prototypicality of the candidate in order to test the possibility that inter-group competition might lead participants to perceive the extreme candidate to be more prototypical, therefore increasing support for the candidate. We did so to address two limitations to the measure of leader fulfillment of identity needs used in Study 2: 1) it is possible that our measure of fulfillment of identity needs was too close in nature to a measure of prototypicality, and 2) although participants acknowledged that the extreme candidate adhered less to party norms than the normative candidate, it is possible that participants viewed the extreme candidate as more effectively fulfilling their identity needs because the candidate was also seen as more prototypical.

In sum, Study 3 was designed to replicate the findings from Studies 1 and 2 on the effect of inter-group competition on individuals' preferences for an extreme leader, and to provide direct empirical evidence for the role of inter-group differentiation needs in determining their preference.

Table 4
OLS regressions to predict leader's fulfillment of identity needs and participants' support for leader (Study 2).

Variables	Leader's fulfillment of identity needs		Leader support	
	1	2	2	3
Constant	5.14***	4.37***		4.38***
Party affiliation	.43***	.31**		.01
Leader normativeness	.15	.13		.01
Inter-group competition	.03	.06		.04
Party affiliation × Leader normativeness	−.16	−.16		−.06
Party affiliation × Inter-group competition	.00	−.01		−.05
Leader normativeness × Inter-group competition	.23**	.30**		.13
Party affiliation × Leader normativeness × Inter-group competition	.00	.12		.14
Leader's fulfillment of identity needs				.69***
Leaders' fulfillment of identity needs × Inter-group competition				.09
R ²	.17***	.11***		.41***

Note. N = 253. Entries represent unstandardized regression coefficients. For party affiliation, Republicans were coded −1 and Democrats were coded 1. For leader normativeness, the normative leader was coded −1 and the extreme leader was coded 1. For inter-group competition, low competition was coded −1 and high competition was coded 1.

*p < .05.
**p < .01.
***p < .001.

Accordingly, we made the following predictions: 1) candidate normativeness and level of inter-group competition would interact to predict participants' support for the candidate, such that the extreme candidate would receive greater support than the normative candidate when competition is perceived to be high, 2) the level of inter-group competition and in-group identification would interact to predict need for inter-group differentiation, such that when competition is perceived to be high, high-identifiers would have greater needs for inter-group differentiation than low-identifiers, 3) candidate normativeness and need for inter-group differentiation would interact to predict participants' support for the candidate, such that when participants' needs for differentiation are high, the extreme candidate would receive greater support than the normative candidate, and 4) participants' increased support for the extreme candidate in highly competitive contexts would be driven by their inter-group differentiation needs. Fig. 5 illustrates the statistical model tested in Study 3.

Method

Participants and design

We recruited two hundred sixty-one U.S. citizens (133 Democrats and 128 Republicans, 112 female, M_{age} = 33.51, SD_{age} = 11.64) via Amazon's Mechanical Turk. Participants were paid \$0.50 for completing the study, which employed a 2 (Inter-group competition: High vs. Low) × 2 (Leader normativeness: Normative vs. Extreme) between-participants design.

Procedure

As in Study 2, two online experiments were set up: one for Democrats and the other for Republicans. However, to ensure sufficient variation in levels of identification with the party, party affiliation was not advertised as a requisite for study participation. Upon entering the study website, participants indicated their party affiliation, and were directed to the appropriate study materials. Participants who were affiliated with neither the Democratic nor the Republican Party were given an explanation for why they could not participate.

After indicating their party affiliation and consent to participate, participants first rated items measuring their identification with their political party. They were then told that they would read information about predictions regarding the 2016 U.S. Presidential election, in which our inter-group competition manipulation was embedded. After reading these predictions, participants reported their need for inter-group differentiation. Next, participants were presented with a brief description of a hypothetical candidate running for the 2016 Presidential election, whose description varied in terms of the candidate's normativeness. Finally, participants indicated their willingness to support the candidate, the candidate's expected likelihood of winning the election in 2016, and their perceptions of the candidate's prototypicality.

Manipulations and measures

Group identification. In-group identification was measured using the four-item identity subscale of the collective self-esteem scale (Luhtanen

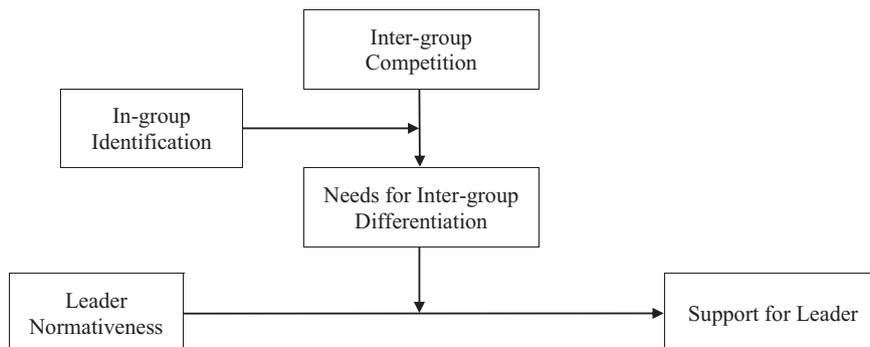


Fig. 5. Statistical model tested in Study 3.

& Crocker, 1992). These items were: “Overall, being a member of my political party has very little to do with how I feel about myself” (reverse-coded), “In general, being a member of my political party is an important part of my self-image,” “Being a member of my political party is an important reflection of who I am,” and “Being a member of my political party is unimportant to my sense of what kind of person I am” (reverse-coded, 1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly disagree*, $\alpha = .88$).

Inter-group competition manipulation. As in Study 2, our inter-group competition manipulation was embedded in a report about political scientists' predictions regarding the presidential election. In the report, one factor was highlighted as being particularly important for predicting electoral outcomes, which indicated that the election would be more or less competitive. Again, as in Study 2, for realism, the highlighted factor varied depending on the experimental condition. For example, Democratic participants in the *Low Competition* condition read,

Among the key factors, shifts in voter demographics are shown to be fairly important. The Census predicts significant shifts in the demographic make-up of the United States in terms of ethnicity, with minority voters typically favoring Democrats. Thus, the model predicts that the 2016 Presidential election will favor Democrats, with the Democratic candidate's probability of winning the election predicted at 77.2%, unless a significant change in economic, political, and social environments occurs.

In contrast, Republican participants in the *Low Competition* condition read,

Among the key factors, shifts in voter demographics are shown to be fairly important. The Census predicts significant shifts in the demographic make-up of the United States in terms of age, with older voters typically favoring Republicans. Thus, the model predicts that the 2016 Presidential election will favor Republicans, with the Republican candidate's probability of winning the election predicted at 77.2%, unless a significant change in economic, political, and social environment occurs.

In this way, participants were led to believe that the probability that their party's candidate would win the election was either high or low (i.e., competition was either high or low, see Table 5 for the full texts of our inter-group competition manipulation used in Study 3).

Need for inter-group differentiation. Following the inter-group competition manipulation, participants answered three questions that gauged their need for inter-group differentiation. Specifically, participants were asked, “How important is it to you that the average Democratic [Republican] voter understands and sees the differences between the Democratic [Republican] and the Republican [Democratic] parties?” (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*), “It is important for Democratic [Republican] party members to understand the differences between the Democratic [Republican] and the Republican [Democratic] parties' core values and principles,” and “The Democratic [Republican] party needs to demonstrate to its voter base that what the Democratic [Republican] party stands for is different from what the Republican [Democratic] party stands for.” (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*, $\alpha = .85$).

Leader normativeness manipulation. After responding to the inter-group differentiation need items, all participants read:

We realize that 2016 seems far away. However, we are interested in what kinds of candidates voters would prefer at this time. Given the information you just read about the predictions regarding the 2016 Presidential election, we would like you to consider the following hypothetical candidate running for the 2016 Presidential election.

Participants were then given the same information as those used in Study 2 about the candidate's position relative to the average of the party's congressional members' positions. Specifically, participants in the *Extreme* condition read that the candidate was more liberal [conservative] than the average of the party's congressional members, whereas participants in the *Normative* condition read that the candidate was on par with the average of the party's congressional members.

Leader support. After reading the information about the candidate, participants indicated their willingness to support the candidate on the same three items used in Study 2 ($\alpha = .81$).

Manipulation checks. As in Study 2, participants rated their expectation of the likelihood that their candidate would win the 2016 Presidential election (1 = *extremely unlikely*, 7 = *extremely likely*), and the extent to which the candidate was liberal or conservative compared to their party's average congressperson (1 = *extremely liberal*, 7 = *extremely conservative* for Democratic participants, and 1 = *extremely conservative*, 7 = *extremely liberal* for Republican participants).

Perceived group prototypicality. We also measured perceptions of the candidate's prototypicality using three items adapted from Platow and van Knippenberg (2001): “This candidate is typical of Democrats [Republicans],” “This candidate is a good example of a Democratic [Republican] candidate,” and “This candidate is a good example of a Democrat [Republican]” (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*, $\alpha = .87$).

Results

Table 6 presents descriptive statistics and correlations among the variables in Study 3.

Manipulation checks³

We checked whether our inter-group competition manipulation worked as intended with a 2 (Party affiliation: Democratic vs. Republican) \times 2 (Inter-group competition: High vs. Low) \times 2 (Leader normativeness: Normative vs. Extreme) ANOVA on participants' ratings of their candidate's likelihood of winning the election. The analysis revealed three significant main effects. First, Democratic participants expected their candidate to be more likely to win the election ($M = 5.11$, $SD = 1.24$) than Republican participants ($M = 4.38$, $SD = 1.56$), $F(1, 253) = 19.39$, $p < .001$, Cohen's $d = .52$. Second, participants rated the candidate in the *Low Competition* condition as significantly more likely to win the election ($M = 5.08$, $SD = 1.42$) than the candidate in the *High Competition* condition ($M = 4.40$, $SD = 1.40$), $F(1, 253) = 15.80$, $p < .001$, Cohen's $d = .48$, suggesting that our inter-group competition manipulation was effective. Finally, the main effect of Leader normativeness was significant, such that participants viewed the *Normative* candidate as more likely to win the election ($M = 5.01$, $SD = 1.34$) than the *Extreme* candidate ($M = 4.48$, $SD = 1.51$), $F(1, 253) = 9.18$, $p = .003$, Cohen's $d = .37$.

The same analysis was conducted on participants' ratings of the extremity of the candidate. This analysis revealed a significant main effect of Leader normativeness, showing that participants rated the *Extreme* candidate as holding a more extreme position ($M = 2.63$, $SD = 1.11$) than the *Normative* candidate ($M = 3.40$, $SD = 1.20$), $F(1, 253) =$

³ As in Study 2, we asked participants to indicate the extent to which they agreed to the statement “I think the model's prediction is believable,” (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly strongly agree*). Overall, participants believed the modeled predictions that we used to manipulate inter-group competition ($M = 5.06$, $SD = 1.23$), $t(260) = 13.35$, $p < .001$, compared with the scale midpoint. This rating was affected neither by participants' party affiliation, nor by our manipulated factors and their interactions. Again, as in Study 2, all of the results reported remained unchanged when we conducted the same analyses without low-believing participants (34 participants, 25 Republicans and 9 Democrats), whose rating of the believability item was below the midpoint of 4.

Table 5
Inter-group Competition Manipulation (Study 3).

	High inter-group competition	Low inter-group competition
Democratic participants	Among these key factors, strength in numerical majority in both the House and the Senate is shown to be fairly important. As Republicans control the House, and Democrats control the Senate, there is not a clear majority in Congress. Thus, the model predicts that the 2016 Presidential election will be close, with the Democratic candidate's probability of winning the election predicted at 51.2%, unless a significant change in economic, political, and social environments occurs.	Among these key factors, shifts in voter demographics are shown to be fairly important. The Census predicts significant shifts in the demographic make-up of the United States in terms of ethnicity, with minority voters typically favoring Democrats. Thus, the model predicts that the 2016 Presidential election will favor Democrats, with the Democratic candidate's probability of winning the election predicted at 77.2%, unless a significant change in economic, political, and social environments occurs.
Republican participants	Among these key factors, strength in numerical majority in both the House and the Senate is shown to be fairly important. As Republicans control the House, and Democrats control the Senate, there is not a clear majority in Congress. Thus, the model predicts that the 2016 Presidential election will be close, with the Republican candidate's probability of winning the election predicted at 51.2%, unless a significant change in economic, political, and social environments occurs.	Among these key factors, shifts in voter demographics are shown to be fairly important. The Census predicts significant shifts in the demographic make-up of the United States in terms of age, with older voters typically favoring Republicans. Thus, the model predicts that the 2016 Presidential election will favor Republicans, with the Republican candidate's probability of winning the election predicted at 77.2%, unless a significant change in economic, political, and social environments occurs.

28.33, $p < .001$, Cohen's $d = .67$. In both analyses, no higher-order interactions were significant, $F_s < 1$.

Leader support

As in Studies 1 and 2, we predicted that participants would be more willing to support an extreme candidate than a normative candidate when they perceive the election to be highly competitive. To test this hypothesis, we submitted participants' willingness to support the leader to the above ANOVA. As in Study 2, the main effect of party affiliation was significant, with Democratic participants significantly more willing to support their party's candidate ($M = 4.88, SD = 1.03$) than Republican participants ($M = 4.28, SD = 1.47$), $F(1, 253) = 15.28, p < .001$, Cohen's $d = .47$.

Importantly, replicating the finding from Study 2, the analysis revealed the predicted Leader normativeness \times Inter-group competition interaction, $F(1, 253) = 7.10, p = .008$, see Fig. 6. Specifically, when the election was described to be highly competitive, participants were more willing to support the *Extreme* candidate ($M = 4.87, SD = 1.28$) than the *Normative* candidate ($M = 4.20, SD = 1.34$), $t(253) = 2.78, p = .006$, Cohen's $d = .51$, whereas when the election was described to be less competitive, participants' support for the *Extreme* candidate ($M = 4.36, SD = 1.47$) did not differ from their support for the *Normative* candidate ($M = 4.56, SD = 1.26$), $t(253) = .97, p = .33$. In addition, participants' willingness to support the *Extreme* candidate was higher when inter-group competition was high than when competition was low, $t(253) = 2.20, p = .029$, Cohen's $d = .37$. No other main effects or higher-order interaction effects were significant.

We also predicted that when participants' need for inter-group differentiation is high, they would provide greater support for the *Extreme* candidate than for the *Normative* candidate. We tested this prediction by regressing Leader support on participants' party affiliation (contrast coded, Republican = -1 , Democrat = 1), Leader normativeness (contrast

coded, a normative candidate = -1 , an extreme candidate = 1), mean-centered Inter-group differentiation need, and the two- and three-way interactions among these variables. The analysis revealed a significant Leader normativeness \times Inter-group differentiation needs interaction, $b = .18, SE = .06, p = .003$, see Fig. 7. A simple slope analysis indicated that among participants with high differentiation needs ($1 SD$ above the mean), support for the extreme candidate was significantly greater than support for the normative candidate ($b = .27, SE = .07, p < .001$), whereas those with low differentiation needs ($1 SD$ below the mean) did not support the extreme candidate more than they supported the normative candidate ($b = -.19, SE = .23, p = .41$).

The role of in-group identification

We predicted that, based on prior work showing the role of in-group identification (e.g., Jetten et al., 2004), highly identified participants would respond to a competitive electoral contest by increasing their desire for inter-group differentiation. To test this prediction, we regressed participants' need for inter-group differentiation on participants' Party affiliation (contrast coded, Republican = -1 , Democrat = 1), Inter-group competition (contrast coded, low inter-group competition = -1 , high inter-group competition = 1), mean-centered In-group identification, and the two- and three-way interaction terms among these variables. As predicted, the results revealed a significant interaction between Inter-group competition and In-group identification, $b = .13, SE = .05, p = .012$, such that inter-group competition increased inter-group differentiation needs among highly identified participants, ($1 SD$ above the mean), $b = .28, SE = .14, p = .045$, whereas inter-group competition did not have a significant effect on inter-group differentiation needs among participants who were low in identification, ($1 SD$ below the mean), $b = -.16, SE = .12, p = .19$ (Fig. 8). No other main effects or higher-order interaction effects were significant.

Table 6
Means, standard deviations, and correlations among study variables (Study 3).

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Party affiliation								
2. Inter-group competition			.00					
3. Leader normativeness			.03	.05				
4. Need for differentiation	5.45	1.25	.03	.00	.01			
5. In-group identification	3.68	1.46	.07	.06	.07	.27***		
6. Perceived prototypicality	5.09	1.09	.10	-.04	-.18**	.17**	.17**	
7. Leader support	4.58	1.30	.23***	-.03	.05	.41***	.28***	.46***

Note. $N = 261$. For party affiliation, Republicans were coded -1 and Democrats were coded 1 . For inter-group competition, low competition was coded -1 and high competition was coded 1 . For leader normativeness, normative leader was coded -1 and extreme leader was coded 1 .

** $p < .01$.
*** $p < .001$.

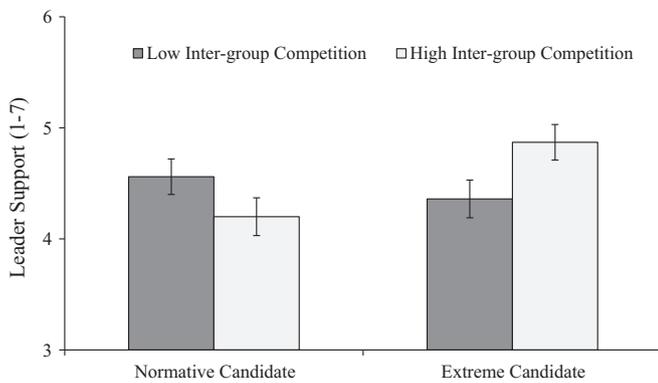


Fig. 6. Leader support as a function of leader normativeness and inter-group competition (Study 3). Error bars represent standard errors.

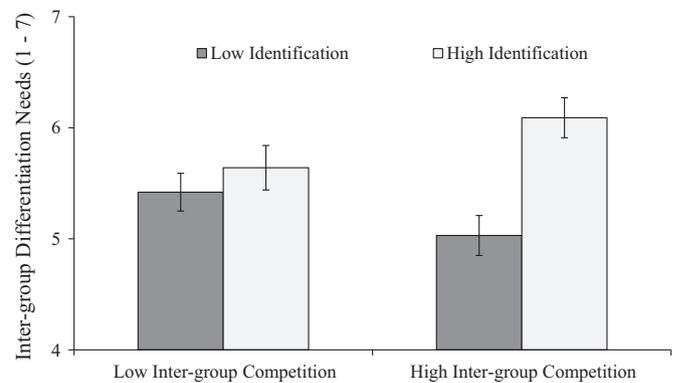


Fig. 8. Inter-group differentiation needs as a function of inter-group competition and in-group identification (Study 3). High- and low-identifiers are defined at one standard deviation above and below the mean.

Mediation analysis

We predicted that when inter-group competition is perceived to be high, strongly identified participants would have higher inter-group differentiation needs. These heightened needs, in turn, would lead participants to increase their support for an extreme candidate. In other words, we predicted that inter-group differentiation needs, resulting from inter-group competition, would mediate the interactive effect of the normativeness of the candidate and inter-group competition on participants' support for the candidate, amounting to a mediated moderation (Edwards & Lambert, 2007; Muller et al., 2005).

Following the guidelines for establishing mediated moderation (Baron & Kenny, 1986; Edwards & Lambert, 2007; Muller et al., 2005), we conducted a series of regressions to show the following: 1) an extreme candidate would be supported more than a normative candidate when the election is perceived to be highly competitive (a significant Leader normativeness \times Inter-group competition interaction on Leader support), 2) an extreme candidate would be supported more than a normative candidate when inter-group differentiation needs are high (a significant Leader normativeness \times Inter-group differentiation needs interaction on Leader support), 3) high inter-group competition would increase need for inter-group differentiation among highly identified participants (a significant Inter-group competition \times In-group identification interaction on Inter-group differentiation needs), and 4) the Leader normativeness \times Inter-group competition interaction becomes non-significant in the presence of the Leader normativeness \times Inter-group differentiation needs interaction, while the latter interaction would remain a significant predictor of Leader support.

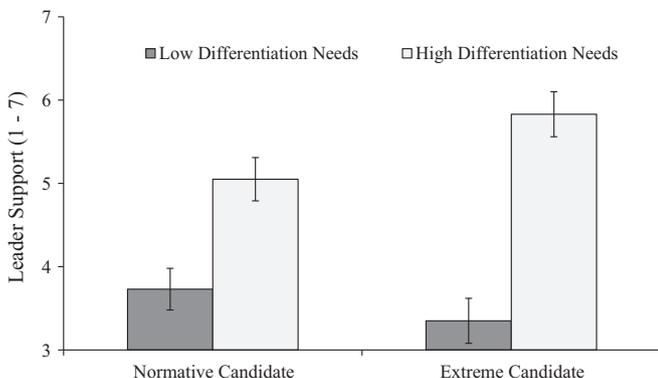


Fig. 7. Leader support as a function of leader normativeness and inter-group differentiation needs (Study 3). High and low differentiation needs are defined at one standard deviation above and below the mean.

As described above, we have provided evidence for Conditions 1, 2, and 3. And, as can be seen in Column 3 in Table 7, Condition 4 was also met. Specifically, when entered simultaneously into the model predicting Leader support, the Leader normativeness \times Inter-group differentiation needs interaction on Leader support was significant, $b = .20$, $SE = .06$, $p = .001$, while the previously significant Leader normativeness \times Inter-group competition interaction on Leader support was no longer significant, $b = .14$, $SE = .08$, $p = .057$. These results provide statistical support for our overall mediated moderation model, demonstrating that Inter-group differentiation needs mediated the interactive effect of Leader normativeness and Inter-group competition on Leader support.

Finally, we probed whether accounting for the effect of Inter-group differentiation needs significantly reduced the interactive effect of Leader normativeness and Inter-group competition on Leader support using 1000 bootstrapped samples (Hayes, 2013). We predicted that Inter-group differentiation needs underlie participants' increased support for the extreme candidate in the high inter-group competition condition. This prediction receives statistical support if the indirect effect of Leader normativeness \times Inter-group competition interaction on Leader support through Inter-group differentiation needs is significant, with the 95% confidence interval of the indirect effect excluding zero (Hayes, 2013). In our data, the size of the indirect effect was $.07$, $SE = .03$, $p = .02$, and the 95% confidence interval from the bootstrap analysis excluded zero [.02, .15]. Thus, Inter-group differentiation needs mediated the interactive effect of Leader normativeness and Inter-group competition on Leader support.

Supplemental analyses

We also tested two alternative explanations for our findings. First, it is possible that high competition led participants to view an extreme candidate as more prototypical of the party than a normative candidate, therefore driving their support. To test this possibility, we conducted a 2 (Party affiliation: Democratic vs. Republican) \times 2 (Inter-group competition: High vs. Low) \times 2 (Leader normativeness: Normative vs. Extreme) ANOVA on participants' perceptions of the candidate's prototypicality. This analysis revealed only a main effect of leader normativeness, such that the *Extreme* candidate was rated as significantly less prototypical of the party ($M = 4.89$, $SD = 1.09$) than the *Normative* candidate ($M = 5.28$, $SD = 1.06$), $F(1, 253) = 8.32$, $p = .004$, Cohen's $d = .36$. No other main effects or higher-order interaction effects were significant. These results are inconsistent with the alternative explanation that inter-group competition results in the extreme candidate being perceived as prototypical, thus garnering support.

Second, participants' support might simply depend on their perceptions of the candidate's perceived likelihood of winning the election. Inconsistent with this possibility, our manipulation checks indicated that

Table 7
OLS regressions to predict participants' needs for inter-group differentiation and support for leader (Study 3).

Variables	Inter-group differentiation needs		Leader Support	
	1	2	2	3
Constant	5.45***		4.49***	4.49***
Party affiliation	.01		.23**	.23**
Inter-group competition	-.01		.03	-.01
In-group identification	.23***		.19**	.14*
Party affiliation × Inter-group competition	.01		.06	.06
Party affiliation × In-group identification	.02		-.03	-.05
Inter-group competition × In-group identification	.13*		.14**	.10
Party affiliation × Inter-group competition × In-group identification	-.04		-.02	.00
Leader normativeness			.09	.10
Leader normativeness × Inter-group competition			.20*	.14
Inter-group differentiation needs				.30***
Leader normativeness × Inter-group differentiation needs				.20**
R ²	.10***		.15***	.41***

Note. $N = 261$. Entries represent unstandardized regression coefficients. For party affiliation, Republicans were coded -1 and Democrats were coded 1 . For leader normativeness, the normative leader was coded -1 and the extreme leader was coded 1 . For inter-group competition, low competition was coded -1 and high competition was coded 1 .

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$.

participants expected the *Extreme* candidate to be less likely to win the election than the *Normative* candidate, regardless of the competitiveness of the election. Despite acknowledging the reduced general appeal of the extreme candidate, they still supported him more when competition was high.

Discussion

Replicating the results of Studies 1 and 2, Study 3 demonstrated that an extreme leader was preferred to a normative leader when inter-group competition was perceived to be high. Study 3 also provided evidence that this increase in support is driven by the desire for inter-group differentiation. Specifically, high inter-group competition increased highly identified participants' desire to maximize inter-group differences, which in turn increased their support for an extreme leader.

Study 3 also allowed us to rule out two alternative explanations for the preference for extreme leaders in competitive contexts. Specifically, perceived electability and prototypicality could not account for the increase in support for extreme leaders; participants perceived the electability of the extreme leader to be lower than that of a normative candidate, and also perceived the extreme candidate to be less prototypical than the normative one. While electability and prototypicality are certainly desirable qualities for a leader that will lead to support in some situations, our results suggest that in competitive electoral contexts, it is extremity in particular that appeals to group members, due to their heightened inter-group differentiation needs.

General discussion

Our primary argument is that inter-group competition increases group members' preference for extreme leaders by inducing a greater need for inter-group differentiation. Because extreme leaders are more capable of effectively addressing these needs, they are supported more under these conditions. Study 1 demonstrated that inter-group competition increases group members' preference for an extreme leader. Study 2 indicated that the increased preference for extreme leaders in competitive inter-group contexts stems from the perception that extreme leaders are more effective at addressing their identity needs. Finally, Study 3 provided evidence that the differential preference for extreme leaders is driven by inter-group differentiation needs; heightened inter-group competition elevates participants' needs to further inter-group differences, especially for those strongly identified with their group, which subsequently increase their preference for extreme leaders. To our knowledge, this research is the first to empirically demonstrate

that in-group extremists (i.e., pro-normative deviants) can sometimes be preferred to normative members.

These results add to a growing literature that has started to explore when and why groups show preference for deviance over normativeness (c.f., Abrams et al., 2008; Morton et al., 2007; Teixeira et al., 2011). This work has shown that groups seem to tolerate deviance as long as such deviance can bring material benefits to the group (Abrams et al., 2008; Morton et al., 2007). The current research demonstrates that identity-related needs, such as securing group distinctiveness by increasing inter-group difference, may also lead group members to reward deviance, even at a potential cost to material outcomes for the group. For example, we found that when inter-group differentiation needs were heightened, group members preferred the extreme candidate to the normative candidate, despite seeing the two candidates as equally likely to win in an election (Study 2), and, more surprisingly, even when they expected the extreme candidate to be less likely to win the election than the normative candidate (Study 3). This suggests that a concern for a group identity that is distinct from relevant out-groups may come to the fore under highly competitive inter-group contexts, and can sometimes even trump concerns about material group outcomes, such as winning an electoral contest.

The present research also makes two contributions to our understanding of social identity based group processes. First, we demonstrate that characteristics of the inter-group situation, such as the competitiveness of inter-group relations, can shape intra-group processes. This finding extends prior work documenting the importance of having a salient out-group present as a requirement for identity based intra-group processes to occur (Hogg et al., 1998; Marques et al., 1998). We additionally show that once this condition is met, the nature of the relationship with the out-group can also have a critical influence on such processes; making an out-group salient is not the same as highlighting the competitiveness of the inter-group relationship. Our second contribution is more specific to social identity based leadership processes. Previous theory and research suggests that conforming to group norms (i.e., behaving more normatively) can help group members attain leadership positions, because doing so signals their loyalty to the group (Hollander, 1958). Our findings highlight a different strategy that group members might take to attain status: appearing to be extreme.

Prior work on expressions of extreme positions have focused on the possibility that when individuals feel uncertain about the self, they are motivated to express extreme opinions in a bid to restore their sense of self-certainty. That is, by expressing an extreme position, individuals can demonstrate that they actually do have strong convictions that indicate that they are certain about the self (Morrison & Miller, 2008;

Morrison & Wheeler, 2010). Importantly, these processes are intra-personal, in the sense that the expression of extremity is internally motivated, rather than an externally-driven impression management strategy. In contrast, our research raises the possibility that group members who aspire to become leaders might be aware of intra-group processes that will reward extremity, and will take advantage of this possibility by strategically portraying themselves as more extreme than they actually are when situations demand in-group extremism. Conversely, if they realize their leadership goals may be better served by hiding their extremism, these leadership- or status-seeking members might also portray themselves as normative, even if their true position may be more extreme. Neither option bodes well for subsequent inter-group interaction if leaders strategically portray themselves in a certain manner during the leadership appointment phase, and reveal their true positions only later. Thus, future research will benefit from exploring how group identity based leadership processes, in combination with the goals and needs induced by situational characteristics, influence the behavior of group members vying for leadership positions.

One aspect of our findings that bears some notice is the results when competition was low. In Study 1, a normative candidate was preferred in the *Low Competition* condition, whereas in Studies 2 and 3, participants were equally likely to support a normative candidate or an extreme candidate when competition was low. We believe that these results are an artifact of the different contexts and designs that we employed across the studies. In Study 1, we used a within-participant design in which participants compared and evaluated among candidates from the same political party, thus allowing us to more clearly see the oft-found preference for normative candidates. However, in Studies 2 and 3, participants saw the profile of a single candidate who was to be competing with the candidate of an out-group. Since the contests in Studies 2 and 3 were explicitly inter-group in nature, it is likely that participants would support their political party's candidate, regardless of the candidate's perceived normativeness. Indeed, it might be all the more surprising that we were able to detect differences in support, given this predilection for in-group favoritism. However, it is important to note that our results were consistent in the high inter-group competition conditions across the three studies, suggesting that our primary prediction holds: in-group extremists are preferred when inter-group competition is high.

Finally, we should note that our approach to normativeness was a holistic one, in which we conceptualized and operationalized the normativeness of group members in terms of candidates' overall political orientation, relative to the general norms of the group. That is, we did not specify the candidates' individual policy positions on any particular issue. However, in some social groups, norms do involve attitudes on specific issues. For example, to be considered a member of a particular political party entails specific views on various social and economic issues. This opens up the question of how any one specific attitude might be weighted in determining a group member's normativeness. Does a Democrat's opinion that abortion is wrong, but whose attitudes are otherwise consistent with the party line, overwhelm the fact that on most dimensions, she is normative? Fundamental to this question is how people conceptualize identity, and future research could examine how groups perceive the normativeness of group members who have conflicting attitudes on core group identity issues.

Conclusion

In this paper, we demonstrate that heightened inter-group differentiation needs, as elicited by highly competitive inter-group contexts, can result in a desire for extreme leaders. We want to note that the desire for extreme leaders can be costly, particularly in the political context. One cost is to the group itself; extreme leaders are less likely to win in an election where candidates from multiple parties are competing (Downs, 1957). But, more importantly, a competitive context that drives groups to choose extreme leaders can come at a cost to the social system more

generally. If all groups choose leaders that are at the groups' ideological extremes, then they are less likely to be able to work effectively with one another (Bond & Fleisher, 2000), despite needing to do so in order for political systems to function successfully. Indeed, political pundits have noted that the bi-partisan acrimony in the United States Congress has reached record levels (Pew Research Center, 2012), leading to such extreme outcomes as the shutdown of the federal government in the fall of 2013. The level of antagonism has led the three major credit rating agencies to downgrade the credit rating of U.S. sovereign debt, claiming that the political gridlock in Washington represents a significant risk. In this way, the desire for group distinctiveness from out-groups, and the complementary rise of extreme leaders, resembles the age-old quandary raised by many group situations: what is good for the group might not be good for society at large.

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