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Social Psychology

Followers' Regulatory Mode and Leadership Style Preferences: Does the Task Time Perspective Moderate Their Relation?

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Leadership style preferences are in part shaped by differences in people's self-regulation. However, research shows inconsistent findings regarding the relation between followers' regulatory mode (locomotion – a need for maintaining movement and change; and assessment – a need for evaluating and critically comparing) and their preferences for directive versus participative leadership styles. The present research aimed to test whether a short-term versus long-term task time perspective moderates this relation, and as such whether time perspective might reconcile previous findings. In three preregistered studies, we measured participants' regulatory mode and manipulated task time perspective by asking participants to recall short- versus long-term tasks they had completed in the past (Study 1, $N = 304$; Study 2, $N = 373$) or to imagine working in a company and having to complete short- versus long-term tasks (Study 3, $N = 355$). Participants then indicated their leadership style preferences for the respective task. Contrary to predictions, the results of all studies and an internal meta-analysis indicated that task time perspective does not moderate the relation between followers' regulatory mode and their leadership styles preferences. However, independent of the task time perspective, followers' locomotion mode was consistently and positively associated with a preference for participative leadership. The present findings point to the importance of taking into account followers' regulatory mode when considering their leadership preferences. Indeed, considering locomotors' participative leadership style preference is crucial to ensure leadership style fit and foster motivation at work.

A crucial determinant of employees' motivation, job satisfaction and commitment is their leader, along with the leadership behavior they employ (Derue et al., 2011). The success of different leadership styles depends on various aspects, such as work complexity (D. Wang et al., 2014) or national culture (P. Li et al., 2021). One key characteristic, however, is followers' self-regulatory orientation (Sassenberg & Hamstra, 2017), which determines the type of goals and strategies followers prefer (Sassenberg & Vliek, 2019). Because leadership styles indicate to followers which strategies they should employ, their success is likely to depend on whether or not these strategies match followers' self-regulatory orientation. Indeed, research considering self-regulatory differences from the perspective of regulatory focus theory (Higgins, 1998) evidenced clear preferences for specific leadership styles based on peoples' promotion focus on ideals and advancement – entailing a preference for transformational leadership – versus their prevention focus on duties and security – entailing a preference for transactional leadership (for a review see Sassenberg & Hamstra, 2017). Much research shows that when leaders implement style fitting followers' regulatory focus, this result in positive consequences such as greater creativity and lower turnover intentions (Hamstra et al., 2011; Kark et al., 2018). However, research on similar fit effects regarding other self-regulatory orientations, such as regulatory mode, is not only rather scarce, but also and conveys inconsistent findings. Accordingly, the main aim of the present work is to reconcile previous findings.

Regulatory mode theory (Kruglanski et al., 2000) posits two orientations, locomotion mode – a need for moving forward and change, and assessment mode – a need for

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critically evaluating and accuracy. Both shape peoples' preferred strategies in goal pursuit and influence their behavior at work. Given its impact on followers' work-related strategies, regulatory mode is also likely to shape their leadership style preferences.

However, previous studies investigating this relation report inconsistent results. Indeed, some studies show that followers' locomotion (assessment) entailed a preference for directive (participative) leadership (Kruglanski et al., 2007), but these preferences were found to reverse in other studies (Beylat et al., 2020; Pierro et al., 2009). It therefore remains unclear how followers' regulatory mode relates to leadership style preference. At the same time, a clearer understanding of this relation is important: at the theoretical level this would contribute to clarifying our knowledge on regulatory fit effects in the work context; at the practical level downstream consequences might bear upon followers' motivation and performance.

Accordingly, we aimed to address previous inconsistencies by considering a contextual factor relevant to regulatory mode: time perspective (Kruglanski et al., 2016). Specifically, we considered how a task's time perspective might moderate the relation between followers' locomotion mode and their leadership style preferences. We expected that a stronger locomotion mode would lead followers to prefer directive leadership when focusing on short-term goals, but to prefer participative leadership when focusing on long-term goals.

Regulatory Mode, Interpersonal Regulatory Fit, and Leadership Preferences

Regulatory mode theory (Kruglanski et al., 2000) posits two self-regulatory orientations – locomotion and assessment mode (Higgins et al., 2003; Kruglanski et al., 2010). In a locomotion mode people are concerned with progress, maintaining the action flow, and "just doing it". Indeed, locomotors favor motion and change – and this with little concern for *optimal* action as long as action *per se* is ensured. For instance, when providing help, they are quick to provide whatever help is readily available to them even if this does not fit recipients' needs (Cavallo et al., 2016). Stronger locomotion mode also leads people to maintain movement and complete initiated actions (Higgins et al., 2003; Kruglanski et al., 2000) and correlates with workers' effort invested in work tasks to ensure progress and maintain motion (Pierro et al., 2006a).

In contrast, assessors are concerned with critical comparisons, evaluations, and "doing it right". For example, when making a choice, they prefer simultaneously comparing all alternatives rather than proceeding using a quicker strategy consisting in continuous elimination – which locomotors prefer (Avnet & Higgins, 2003). Because of a concern with doing things right, stronger assessment also leads to stronger self-correction (Appelt et al., 2010) and more seeking of negative feedback at work (Liu et al., 2021).

People experience *regulatory fit* when they pursue a goal in a manner that sustains their regulatory orientation (Higgins, 2000, 2005). The feeling of fit, in turn, produces positive effects such as increased motivation (Avnet & Higgins, 2021) and greater willingness to change one's behavior (Pierro, Giacomantonio, Pica, Giannini, et al., 2013). Regulatory fit also influences interpersonal interactions. To illustrate, people deem support (Zee et al., 2018) and reactions from partners following disclosures (Rehani & Bar-Kalifa, 2022) more helpful when they fit their own regulatory mode. In addition, people are also more prone to take advice, even if it is not sound, when this advice is conveyed in a mode-fitting manner (Du et al., 2022). At work, such interpersonal self-regulatory fit effects should be prominent (Sassenberg & Hamstra, 2017), especially as leaders' behavior shapes followers' goal pursuit strategies.

Although there is substantial evidence for regulatory fit between leadership behavior and followers' regulatory focus (e.g., Hamstra et al., 2014; Higgins, 1998; Kark et al., 2018; Shin et al., 2017) the evidence regarding regulatory mode is mixed. On the one hand, Kruglanski et al. (2007) found that follower's stronger locomotion predicts their preference for directive leadership (House, 1996), a leadership style that consists in giving clear instructions regarding what precisely needs to be done. In addition, follower's stronger assessment predicted a preference for participative leadership, a style that takes into consideration followers' perspective in the decision-making process. According to Kruglanski and colleagues, a directive leadership constrains but also pushes forward followers, ensuring timely goal achievement, which corresponds with a locomotion mode; whereas a participative leadership style involves consultation and discussions of alternatives, ensuring critical evaluation of options, which corresponds with an assessment mode.

On the other hand, recent work found a positive association between chronic locomotion and preferences for participative leadership (Beylat et al., 2020), in line with other previous findings. First, locomotion-oriented students were found to prefer an autonomy-oriented teaching – and thus a style resembling participative leadership (Pierro et al., 2009). Second, locomotion-oriented followers were found to prefer transformational leadership (Benjamin & Flynn, 2006), which promotes positive change and jointly working towards a shared vision for the long-term future (Bass, 1985; Lowe et al., 1996) – and thus again a style more closely resembling participative rather than directive leadership. These findings are attributed to the more flexible styles allowing an uninterrupted action flow, which fits with locomotion. In addition, transformational leadership encourage changes, thus perfectly matching locomotion concerns.

Assessment, on the other hand, was either not found to predict differences in leadership style preference (Benjamin & Flynn, 2006; Beylat et al., 2020) or to be positively associated with control-oriented teaching, a style resembling directive leadership (Pierro et al., 2009). The latter finding is attributed to this style entailing more appraisals, which fits with assessment concerns regarding critical (self-)evaluation.

Overall, the literature reveals at best unclear, at worst contradictory associations of regulatory modes and leadership style preferences. It thus seems reasonable to assume

that these inconsistent findings could be resolved by considering a contextual moderator, as we explain below.

Considering the Context: Locomotion and Time Perspective

To understand what contextual factor may play a role in locomotors' preferences, we can review the strategies associated with this mode that, when used, should result in regulatory fit (e.g., Avnet & Higgins, 2003). Locomotors need to feel they are in movement, that they are changing from one state to the next. In addition, as time is a key resource for their goal achievement, locomotors need to feel they properly use it (Amato et al., 2019; Kruglanski et al., 2016). Their preferred approach is to initiate and finish tasks quickly and without delays in order to move on (Higgins, 2012; Pierro et al., 2011; see also Guo & Feng, 2015; Pica et al., 2015). In situations where the task cannot be completed quickly, locomotors seek a sense of movement and feelings of efficient use of time by engaging in alternative strategies, such as time optimization behaviors (e.g., setting priorities; Amato et al., 2014) or multitasking, as engaging in different activities simultaneously give locomotors the feeling that they progress and use their time most efficiently (Pierro, Giacomantonio, Pica, Kruglanski, et al., 2013).

An obvious contextual factor influencing whether a task is to be completed quickly, is its time perspective – whether it is short- or long-term. Taking into account the above research, when working on short-term tasks, locomotors presumably prefer strategies that enable them to finish as soon as possible. In contrast, when engaging in long-term tasks, they are more likely to focus on time management and multitasking. As such, depending on the time perspective locomotion should entail a preference for different strategies and, in turn should prefer leadership styles fostering such divergent strategies. As we will develop further, directive leadership may be better suited for locomotors working on short-term tasks, whereas participative leadership may align more with their documented approach to long-term goals.

A directive leadership style focuses on giving clear instructions on what has to be done and how it should be done. It entails followers having less input in the decision-making but being provided with clear assignments and expectations. As such, it should result in faster advancements, at least in case of short-term objective. Indeed, a recent study showed that in familiar situations, directive leadership leads to quicker decision-making during crises – a typical example of short-term tasks (Post et al., 2022). Consequently, this leadership style should fit with locomotion in short-term goal as it fosters immediate action and transition without further delay or reflection (Kruglanski et al., 2016). This reasoning dovetails with results from a study conducted with firefighters, a context in which short-term, immediate action for task completion is required, and in which locomotion indeed predicted preferences for directive leadership (Kruglanski et al., 2007).

In contrast, a participative leadership style engages followers in the decision making by sharing information and encouraging input. This approach gives followers more control over their progress and actions and they thus tend to feel psychologically empowered (Somech, 2005; Q. Wang et al., 2022). Therefore, this leadership style should be particularly well-suited for locomotors engaged in long-term tasks, as it fulfills their need to maintain control over their time (Higgins, 2012; Kruglanski et al., 2016) and provides opportunities to engage in multiple tasks simultaneously (Pierro, Giacomantonio, Pica, Kruglanski, et al., 2013) as well as the freedom to set priorities (Amato et al., 2014). Supporting this notion, a study conducted with students in schools – with many long-term objectives related to learning new skills – found that students' locomotion was positively associated with an autonomy-supportive teaching style (Pierro et al., 2009).

Turning to assessment strategies, this mode is concerned with comparing all possible options of goals and the means to achieve them (Higgins, 2012) – with time to do so being relatively irrelevant (Kruglanski et al., 2016). Assessors are negatively affected when they fail to make the right decision and have a lower tendency to forgive themselves for past mistakes (Pierro et al., 2018). In sharp contrast to locomotors, the time frame of a given task should not influence their preferred strategies. Firstly, a higher assessment mode is associated with a wider time horizon, meaning that assessors perceive future events, whether short-, medium-, or long-term, as generally more distant (Panno et al., 2014). Secondly, if anything assessors tend to focus more on past experiences rather than on the future (Garcia & Lindskär, 2016; Pierro et al., 2018). What matters in the assessment mode is the value of the actions taken, whilst time seems to be irrelevant for assessors' strategic preferences (Kruglanski et al., 2016). Contrary to locomotors, higher assessment is not correlated with time management behaviors and is negatively associated with perceived control of time (Amato et al., 2014). Assessors also take more time to complete tasks because critical evaluation of different options – whether for short- or long-term goals – takes time (Mauro et al., 2009). Moreover, their need to do things perfectly sometimes delays the initiation of action (Pierro et al., 2011). Consequently, regardless of a task's time perspective, assessors should prefer any leadership style that allows them to compare all available options and make the right decisions.

Overall, task-time perspective should impact locomotors, but not assessors leadership style preferences. This also dovetails with the proposition that time-related features and downstream consequences (e.g. for cognitions, emotions, and relationships) are uniquely related to locomotion but not assessment (Kruglanski et al., 2016).

The Present Research

The current research set out to extend the literature on regulatory mode and leadership style preferences and to reconcile previous findings. To this end, we tested whether a task's short-term versus long-term time perspective (i.e., a contextual feature) moderates the relation between the different modes (i.e., an individual feature) and leadership style appreciation. We measured Prolific Academic (pro-

lific.co) participants' regulatory mode (Kruglanski et al., 2000) before manipulating tasks' time perspective (short- vs. long-term) by asking them to recall previous tasks at work (Studies 1 & 2) or to engage with an organizational simulation (Study 3). Participants then reported their preferences for directive and participative leadership styles.

All three studies were preregistered (Study 1: https://osf.io/m4j6r; Study 2: https://osf.io/7e8fv; Study 3: https://osf.io/drshj). Participants had to be between 18 and 65 years old, be an English native speaker, have a minimum 97% approval rate on Prolific, be employed at least 50% part-time with a direct manager or leader supervising them, and not have participated in other studies of ours on similar topics. Materials, information on power analyses, data, and analysis command files of each study can be found on the Open Science Framework (https://osf.io/6azq8). The research was approved by the institutional ethical of the Université catholique de Louvain (Project 2020-42).

Study 1

Method

Participants

We collected responses from 330 participants (for all studies, sample sizes were determined based on *a priori* power analyses, details are on OSF). As preregistered, we excluded participants who did not indicate English as native language (n = 2), failed two embedded attention checks (Oppenheimer et al., 2009; n = 3), scored higher than 5 on a lie scale (which forms part of the Regulatory Mode Questionnaire; cf. Kopetz et al., 2019; Woltin & Yzerbyt, 2020; n = 1), were outliers (studentized residuals > |3|, Cohen et al., 2003; Judd et al., 2011; n = 1)[1], took less than 3 minutes to complete the study (n = 2), took more than 3 standard deviations of the time needed on average to complete the survey (n = 7), or did not complete the time perspective manipulation properly (n = 10, see materials on OSF for details)[2]. The final sample thus comprised 304 participants (206 females, 98 males; M_{age} = 35.21, SD_{age} = 9.79, range: 19-62 years old).

Procedure and Materials

Participants received £0.70 for participating, which on average took 8 minutes. After providing their informed consent, participants answered questions about their occupation, field, hours or work per week, and how long they had been working with their supervisor. Subsequently, we measured their chronic regulatory mode using the Regulatory Mode Questionnaire (Kruglanski et al., 2000). Next, we manipulated the task time perspective within participants, that is, each participants had to report both a long-term and a short-term goal. In the *short-term* condition, participants were to report a past goal given to them by their supervisor that had taken them a few hours or days to complete. In the *long-term* condition, they were to report a goal that had taken them between several weeks or months to complete. The order of the conditions was randomized. Following each described goal, we measured leadership preferences by asking participants which leadership style they would prefer their leader to adopt when completing the respective goal. We also assessed to what extent participants were committed to reach the reported goals[3]. Finally, participants answered demographic questions, before being debriefed, thanked, and paid.

Measures

Chronic regulatory mode. We used the two 12-item subscales of the well-established Regulatory Mode Questionnaire (Kruglanski et al., 2000) to measure participants' regulatory mode[4]. Participants indicated to what extent they agreed with different statement (e.g., locomotion: "I am a doer"; assessment ''I am a critical person'') using a 6-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*; 6 = *strongly agree*). We computed separate mean score for locomotion (M = 4.18, SD = .66; α = .83) and assessment (M = 3.97, SD = .67; α = .80)[5].

Leadership style preferences. We asked participants to what extent they would like their supervisor to adopt certain behaviors when pursuing either their reported short- or long-term goal. Specifically, we measured their preferences for directive and participative leadership using two 5-item subscales (e.g., directive leadership: "...lets you know precisely what is expected of you"; participative leadership: "... consults with you when facing a problem) comprising items similar to those used by Kruglanski et al. (2007) from the Path-Goal Leadership Questionnaire (Northouse, 1997) and from Li and colleagues (2018). Participants indicated their preferences on a 7-point scale (1 = *not at all*; 7 = *very much*). We computed a mean preference score for both directive (M = 4.96, SD = 1.25; α = .81) and participative leadership (M = 5.71, SD = 1.16; α = .89).

1 For all three reported studies results including outliers are similar to the results excluding them presented in the main text.

2 If not mentioned here or in other studies, other preregistered exclusion criteria die not apply.

3 In Studies 1 and 2, we measured participants' goal commitment to explore its possible moderating role. Goal commitment did not influence our results and is therefore not further discussed.

4 We also used the 6-item lie subscale, as commonly done. However, we did not include it the next studies for time reasons.

5 Here and in the following studies, we also computed a locomotion predominance score by subtracting participants' assessment score from their locomotion score (e.g., Webb et al., 2017; Zee et al., 2018). For all three studies, results are similar to the ones reported here and can be found in the online supplementary materials on OSF.

Table 1. Summary of Results of Study 1[6]

Predictors	*b*	*SE*	$CI_{95\%}$		*t-value*	*p*	R_p^2
			Directive leadership				
Intercept	5.13	0.07	4.99	5.27	73.69	<0.001	0.057
Time perspective (TP)	**-0.35**	**0.07**	**-0.48**	**-0.21**	**-5.11**	**<0.001**	**0.020**
Locomotion (Loc)	0.15	0.11	-0.06	0.36	1.39	0.164	0.003
Assessment (Assm)	**0.21**	**0.10**	**0.01**	**0.41**	**2.01**	**0.045**	**0.007**
TP × Loc	0.03	0.10	-0.17	0.23	0.28	0.783	<0.001
TP × Assm	0.17	0.10	-0.03	0.37	1.65	0.100	0.002
			Participative leadership				
Intercept	5.84	0.06	5.72	5.96	94.50	<0.001	0.139
Time perspective (TP)	**-0.26**	**0.06**	**-0.37**	**-0.15**	**-4.69**	**<0.001**	**0.015**
Locomotion (Loc)	**0.62**	**0.09**	**0.44**	**0.81**	**6.60**	**<0.001**	**0.067**
Assessment (Assm)	-0.01	0.09	-0.20	0.17	-0.15	0.879	0.000
TP × Loc	-0.14	0.09	-0.31	0.03	-1.61	0.108	0.002
TP × Assm	**0.35**	**0.08**	**0.18**	**0.52**	**4.13**	**<0.001**	**0.012**

Note. Results with p < .05 are in bold.

Results

We hypothesized that followers' locomotion relates more with preferences for directive leadership when pursuing a short-term than a long-term goal and that it relates more with preferences for participative leadership when pursuing a long-term rather than a short-term goal. As preregistered, and to test our hypothesis, we conducted two mixed model analyses, one with participants' directive and one with participants' participative leadership style preferences as criterion. As for predictors, we included their locomotion mode (mean-centered), assessment mode (mean-centered), task time perspective (short-term coded -0.5, long-term coded 0.5), the interactions between the two regulatory modes and task time perspective (i.e., locomotion by time perspective; assessment by time perspective) as fixed effects and participants as random effects (see Table 1).

Regarding *directive leadership*, there was no main effect of locomotion but a main effect of assessment, such that participants' assessment mode predicted preference for directive leadership. There was also a main effect of task time perspective in that participants indicated a stronger preference for directive leadership in the long-term condition (M = 5.13, SE = .07) than in the short-term condition (M = 4.78, SE = .07). More directly related to our research interest, there was no interaction between task time perspective and locomotion or assessment. There was no interaction between assessment and task time perspective, either.

Regarding *participative leadership*, there was a main effect of locomotion, such that participants' locomotion mode predicted preferences for participative leadership. There was no main effect of assessment, but there was a main effect of task time perspective as participants indicated a stronger preference for participative leadership in the long-term condition (M = 5.84, SE = .06) than in the short-term condition (M = 5.56, SE = .07). More directly related to our research focus, we found no interaction between locomotion and goal time perspective. However, there was an unexpected interaction between assessment and task time perspective, such that participants assessment mode predicted preference for participative leadership in the short-term condition (b = .34, SE = .09, $CI_{95\%}$ [.15, .52], t = 3.61, p < .001), but not in the long-term condition (b = -.01, SE = .09, $CI_{95\%}$ [-.20, .17], t = -0.15, p = .879).

Discussion

The present results did not support our hypotheses that followers' locomotion and task time perspective would jointly predict leadership preferences: Followers' locomotion mode was associated with preferences for participative rather than directive leadership, but task time perspective did not moderate this relation. At the same time, followers' assessment mode was associated with preferences for directive leadership. In addition, and surprisingly, assessment mode interacted with task time perspective to predict preferences for participative leadership regarding short-term but not long-term tasks. Finally, task time perspective influenced preferences for both leadership styles, with participants indicating a stronger preference for directive *and* participative leadership regarding long-term compared to short-term tasks.

6 In this study and in the following studies, we ran additional linear models not including the interaction terms to gain more accurate estimates of the variables' main effects. The coefficients (and effects) are very similar to the ones reported here and in the next studies. The interested reader can find them in the additional results folder on OSF.

Results regarding both main effects of the two regulatory modes are inconsistent with those from Kruglanski et al. (2007), who also relied on participants with different professions. However, our findings are consistent with results from Pierro et al. (2009), who found that students with a stronger locomotion (assessment) mode were more satisfied with an autonomy-oriented (control-oriented) teaching style.

We did not expect an interaction between followers' assessment and task time perspective found in the current study, and we refrain from interpreting it for now. Although the predicted task time perspective by locomotion interaction did not emerge, the fact that task time perspective influenced participants' leadership preferences confirms the success of our manipulation. One possible account for the absence of the predicted locomotion by time perspective interaction is that the considered leadership styles did not focus clearly enough on specific aspects that would appeal to locomotors. In particular, the items measuring directive leadership behaviors may not have expressed explicitly enough that the leader would push for action to happen quickly. We therefore decided to conduct a follow-up study with a similar design and considered two further leadership styles, namely legitimate power and expert power (Hinkin & Schriesheim, 1989).

Study 2

We again tested our two hypotheses. Additionally, we also wanted to investigate whether followers' locomotion mode would interact with task time perspective to predict preferences regarding two further leadership styles: legitimate power and expert power. Because these styles resonate with directive and participative leadership, respectively, we expected similar findings. That is, we predicted that when focusing on short-term goal, the stronger followers' locomotion mode is, the more they would prefer directive leadership and legitimate power (Hypothesis 1). In addition, we predicted that when focusing on long-term goal, the stronger followers' locomotion mode is, the more they would prefer participative leadership and expert power (Hypothesis 2).

Method

Participants

We recruited 399 participants. To participate, participants had to meet the same inclusion criteria as in Study 1 and should not have taken part in Study 1. As preregistered, we excluded participants who did not indicate English as native language (n = 5), failed two attention checks embedded in the study (Oppenheimer et al., 2009; n = 3), took more than 3 standard deviations of the time needed on average to complete the survey (n = 3), or who did not complete the time perspective manipulation properly (n = 15, see online supplementary material on OSF for more details). The final sample thus comprised 373 participants (237 females, 135 males, 1 preferred not to say; M_{age} = 33.58, SD_{age} = 8.39, range: 18-62 years old).

Procedure and Materials

Participants received £0.75 for participating, which took an average of 9 minutes. Procedure was as in Study 1, except that participants completed two additional leadership style scales measuring preferences for legitimate and expert power (Hinkin & Schriesheim, 1989).

Measures

Chronic regulatory mode. We measured locomotion (M = 4.28, SD = 0.68; α = .85) and assessment (M = 3.93, SD = 0.68; α = .78) mode as in Study 1.

Leadership style preferences. We measured preferences for directive (M = 4.99, SD = 1.25; α = .83) and participative (M = 5.53, SD = 1.14; α = .86) leadership using the same scales as in Study 1. In addition, we measured participants' preferences for legitimate (e.g., "...makes me feel that I have commitments to meet") and expert power (e.g., "... gives me good technical suggestions") using two 4-item subscales from the social power scale (Hinkin & Schriesheim, 1989), the same items as in Kruglanski et al. (2007). Participants indicated their preferences on a 7-point scale (1 = *not at all*; 7 = *very much*). We computed a mean preference score for both legitimate (M = 5.10, SD = 1.34; α = .93) and expert power (M = 5.56, SD = 1.40; α = .94).

Results

As preregistered, we conducted four multilevel model analyses with participants' directive leadership style, participative leadership style, legitimate power, or expert power preference score as criterion and locomotion mode (mean-centered), assessment mode (mean-centered), task time perspective (short-term coded -0.5, long-term coded 0.5), the interactions between the two regulatory modes and task time perspective (i.e., locomotion by time perspective; assessment by time perspective) as fixed effects and participants as random effects (see Table 2).

Regarding *directive leadership*, we found no locomotion or assessment main effect. However, there was a main effect of the task time perspective in that participants again indicated more preference for directive leadership in the long-term condition (M = 5.11, SE = .06) than in the short-term condition (M = 4.86, SE = .06). None of the interactions came out significant.

Regarding *participative leadership*, a main effect of locomotion confirmed that participant's locomotion mode predicted preferences for participative leadership. There was no main effect of assessment, but a main effect of task time perspective again emerged with participants indicating more preference for participative leadership in the long-term condition (M = 5.61, SE = .06) than in the short-term condition (M = 5.46, SE = .06). None of the interactions came out significant.

Regarding preferences for *legitimate power*, a main effect of locomotion indicated that participants' locomotion mode predicted preferences for legitimate power. There was no main effect of assessment, but a main effect of task time perspective such that participants indicated a stronger

Table 2. Summary of Results of Study 2

Predictors	*b*	*SE*	$CI_{95\%}$		*t-value*	*p*	R_p^2
			Directive leadership				
Intercept	5.11	0.06	4.99	5.24	79.17	<0.001	0.016
Time perspective (TP)	**-0.25**	**0.06**	**-0.36**	**-0.14**	**-4.36**	**<0.001**	**0.010**
Locomotion (Loc)	0.08	0.10	-0.11	0.27	0.82	0.414	0.001
Assessment (Assm)	0.11	0.10	-0.07	0.30	1.18	0.237	0.002
TP × Loc	-0.12	0.09	-0.29	0.05	-1.42	0.155	0.001
TP × Assm	0.02	0.08	-0.15	0.18	0.21	0.832	<0.001
			Participative leadership				
Intercept	5.61	0.06	5.49	5.72	97.99	<0.001	0.066
Time perspective (TP)	**-0.15**	**0.04**	**-0.23**	**-0.06**	**-3.40**	**0.001**	**0.004**
Locomotion (Loc)	**0.38**	**0.09**	**0.22**	**0.55**	**4.50**	**<0.001**	**0.026**
Assessment (Assm)	-0.07	0.08	-0.24	0.09	-0.89	0.376	0.001
TP × Loc	0.07	0.06	-0.05	0.20	1.15	0.251	<0.001
TP × Assm	0.02	0.06	-0.10	0.15	0.36	0.721	<0.001
			Legitimate power				
Intercept	5.17	0.07	5.04	5.31	76.98	<0.001	0.069
Time perspective (TP)	**-0.16**	**0.06**	**-0.27**	**-0.05**	**-2.80**	**0.005**	**0.004**
Locomotion (Loc)	**0.52**	**0.10**	**0.33**	**0.72**	**5.22**	**<0.001**	**0.035**
Assessment (Assm)	0.17	0.10	-0.02	0.37	1.73	0.084	0.004
TP × Loc	-0.09	0.08	-0.26	0.07	-1.08	0.281	0.001
TP × Assm	-0.14	0.08	-0.30	0.02	-1.66	0.098	0.001
			Expert power				
Intercept	5.73	0.07	5.59	5.87	80.24	<0.001	0.036
Time perspective (TP)	**-0.34**	**0.06**	**-0.45**	**-0.23**	**-6.07**	**<0.001**	**0.015**
Locomotion (Loc)	**0.29**	**0.11**	**0.08**	**0.50**	**2.72**	**0.007**	**0.010**
Assessment (Assm)	-0.04	0.11	-0.24	0.17	-0.36	0.719	<0.001
TP × Loc	0.03	0.08	-0.13	0.19	0.37	0.712	<0.001
TP × Assm	0.02	0.08	-0.14	0.18	0.24	0.809	<0.001

Note. Results with p < .0125 are in bold.

preference for legitimate power in the long-term (M = 5.17, SE = .07) compared to the short-term condition (M = 5.02, SE = .07). None of the interactions came out significant.

Finally, regarding preferences for *expert power*, a main effect of locomotion indicated that participants' locomotion mode positively predicted preferences for expert power. Whilst there was no main effect of assessment, a main effect of task time perspective showed that participants reported stronger preference for expert power in the long-term (M = 5.73, SE = .07) compared to the short-term condition (M = 5.39, SE = .07). None of the interactions came out significant.

Discussion

As in Study 1, task time perspective did not moderate the relation between followers' locomotion mode and their leadership style preferences as originally hypothesized. However, and replicating Study 1, followers' locomotion mode was again positively associated with a preference for participative leadership. In addition, locomotion also predicted preferences for legitimate and expert power. Unlike Study 1, followers' assessment mode failed to show a relation with a preference for directive leadership (there was also no relation with preferences for any of the other considered leadership styles) . In addition, the interaction between followers' assessment mode and task time perspective in predicting preferences for participative leadership did not replicate. Finally, task time perspective influenced preferences for all four leadership styles, similar to Study 1. Specifically, participants preferred directive leadership, participative leadership, legitimate power, and expert power more strongly when focusing on a long-term rather than a short-term task.

One limitation of the previous studies may reside in the fact that participants could indicate their appreciation for conflicting leadership styles (i.e., both directive *and* participative leadership). However, in real life a leader cannot simultaneously engage in both styles, which moreover would transmit confusing messages to followers. Accordingly, our final study juxtaposes the two styles, using a measure that forces participants to choose between them.

Study 3

We examined the link between followers' regulatory mode and their leadership preferences using a scale directly opposing behavior representing instantiations of directive and participative leadership. This prevented participants from indicating strong preferences for contradictory leadership styles simultaneously in a given moment by forcing them to indicate priorities. We again examined the moderating role of task time perspective.

Method

Participants

397 participants took part. Participants had to meet the same inclusion criteria as in Studies 1 and 2 and should not have taken part in these studies. As preregistered, we excluded participants who did not indicate English as their native language (n = 7), failed two attention checks embedded in the study (Oppenheimer et al., 2009; n = 3), were outliers (studentized residuals > |3|, Cohen et al., 2003; Judd et al., 2011; n = 16), took less than 3 minutes to complete the study (n = 1), took more than 3 standard deviations of the time needed on average to complete the survey (n = 8), or did not complete the time perspective manipulation properly (n = 7, see OSF link for details). The final sample comprised 355 participants (206 females, 149 males; M_{age} = 35.74, SD_{age} = 10.14, range: 18-64 years old).

Procedure and Materials

Participants received £0.60 for participating (on average for 7 minutes). As in previous studies, participants first gave their informed consent, answered a first set of demographics, and completed the questionnaire measuring their regulatory modes. In the current study, we manipulated task time perspective between participants (long-term condition: n = 176, short-term condition: n = 179) by asking participants to imagine doing a job in which they either had to complete short-term or long-term goals and to describe important strategies they would employ to complete the respective goal. We measured their leadership preferences using a scale that opposed directive and participative leadership preferences, before presenting two items which served as time perspective manipulation check. Finally, participants answered demographic questions as in the previous studies, where debriefed, thanked, and compensated.

Measures

Chronic regulatory mode. We measured locomotion (M = 4.29, SD = 0.65; α = .84) and assessment (M = 3.89, SD = 0.73; α = .82) mode as before.

Leadership style preferences. We used a 6-item scale that opposed directive and participative leadership behavior descriptions (e.g., "Let you know precisely what should be done" versus "Ask you for suggestions or ideas concerning what should be done") with a 6-points scale as follow: *strongly prefer* (3, directive leadership), *rather prefer* (2, directive leadership), *prefer a bit more* (1, directive leadership), *prefer a bit more* (-1, participative leadership), *rather prefer* (-2, participative leadership), *strongly prefer* (-3, participative leadership). Overall, participants slightly preferred a participative leadership style (M = -0.85, SD = 1.24, t(354) = -12.93, p < .001; α = .80).

Time perspective manipulation check. We used two items as manipulation check of the task time perspective manipulation (e.g., "The goal you had to complete requires several hours or one to two days to be completed"; scale range: 1 = *totally disagree* to 7 = *totally agree*; r = .79, p < .001).

Results

Manipulation check

To test whether the time perspective manipulation was successful, we ran a t-test with time perspective condition as independent variable and the mean score of the two manipulation check items as dependent variable. This revealed a main effect, t(305.38) = 45.48, p < .001, d = 4.84, indicating that participants in the short-term condition scored higher (M = 6.66, SD = 0.84) than participants in the long-term condition (M = 1.53, SD = 1.24), attesting to the success of our manipulation.

Main Analyses

We regressed participants' leadership preference score on their locomotion mode (mean-centered), assessment mode (mean-centered), task time perspective condition (short-term coded -0.5, long-term coded 0.5) and the interactions between the two regulatory modes and task time perspective (i.e., locomotion by time perspective; assessment by time perspective; for all results see Table 3).

Replicating previous results, we found a main effect of locomotion such that participants' locomotion mode predicted a preference for a participative rather than a directive leadership style. There was no main effect of assessment mode or of task time perspective. Again, there was no interaction between locomotion mode and task time perspective or between assessment and task time perspective.

Discussion

The results of Study 3 indicate that participants' locomotion mode did not interact with task time perspective to predict their leadership preferences, and as such fail to support our hypotheses. However, and as in Studies 1 and 2, followers stronger locomotion mode again predicted stronger preference for participative over directive leadership. In contrast, followers' assessment mode showed no relation with leadership style preferences, nor did it interact with task time perspective. As such, Study 3 corroborates the findings from our previous studies. Indeed, followers' locomotion is associated with a preference for participative leadership style, independently of task time perspective. To provide a more complete view of results across studies, we conducted an internal mini meta-analysis (Goh et al., 2016).

Table 3. Summary of the Results of Study 3

Predictors	*b*	*SE*	$CI_{95\%}$		*t-value*	*p*	R_p^2
Intercept	-0.85	0.06	-0.97	-0.72	-13.36	<0.001	0.085
Time perspective (TP)	0.15	0.13	-0.10	0.40	1.16	0.245	0.004
Locomotion (Loc)	**-0.53**	**0.10**	**-0.72**	**-0.33**	**-5.34**	**<0.001**	**0.076**
Assessment (Assm)	0.06	0.09	-0.11	0.23	0.67	0.501	0.085
TP × Loc	-0.06	0.20	-0.45	0.33	-0.32	0.750	0.004
TP × Assm	0.26	0.18	-0.09	0.61	1.44	0.150	0.076

Notes. Higher in leadership preference scores indicate a stronger preference for directive compared to participative leadership. Results with p < .025 are in bold.

Table 4. Standardized betas and 95% Confidence Intervals for the Locomotion Main Effect and the Locomotion × Time Perspective Interaction in Predicting Leadership Preferences across Studies and in the Internal Meta-Analysis

	β_{Study1}	β_{Study2}	β_{Study3}	$\beta_{Meta\text{-}analysis}$	$p_{Meta\text{-}analysis}$
Locomotion (Loc)	**-.19 [-.28, -.09]**	**-.20 [-.29, -.11]**	**-.28 [-.38, -.18]**	**-.22 [-.28, -.17]**	<.001
Assessment (Assm)	.07 [-.03, .16]	**.09 [.01, .18]**	.04 [-.07, .14]	**.07 [.01, .12]**	.021
Loc × TP	-.04 [-.10, .02]	.05 [.00, .09]	-.02 [-.12, .09]	-.00 [-.06, .06]	.933
Assm x TP	.04 [-.01, .10]	.00 [-.04, .05]	.08 [-.03, .18]	.03 [-.02, .07]	.232

Notes. TP = Time perspective. Higher scores in the leadership preference indicate stronger preferences for directive leadership compared to participative leadership.

Internal Meta-Analysis

To estimate the average effect sizes across studies, we computed a leadership preference score for Studies 1 and 2 (mimicking the measure used in Study 3) by subtracting participants' preference for participative leadership from their preference for directive leadership. This allowed us to have conceptually similar dependent variables and regression models across studies. We then computed standardized betas and conducted the meta-analysis using the metaphor package (Viechtbauer, 2010) in R.

The analysis reveals that the stronger followers' locomotion mode was, the more they preferred participative over directive leadership (see Table 4). In addition, the stronger followers' assessment mode was, the more they preferred directive over participative leadership. There was neither an interaction between locomotion and task time perspective in predicting leadership preferences, nor an interaction between assessment and time perspective. As such, and considering all studies, the results do not support Hypotheses 1 and 2, but align with some – though not all (Kruglanski et al., 2007) – previous work suggesting that locomotion entails a preference for participative leadership (Beylat et al., 2020; Pierro et al., 2009).

General Discussion

Prior work attests that followers' self-regulation influences their leadership style preferences, but findings specifically regarding followers' regulatory mode have been contradictory. We aimed to shed light on these inconsistencies by investigating whether task time perspective moderates the relation between followers' locomotion mode and their leadership preferences. We expected that when focusing on a short-term task, followers' locomotion would be positively associated with preferences for a directive leadership, whereas that when focusing on long-term task, it would be positively associated with preferences for participative leadership. However, across studies, and regardless of whether measuring preferences for styles on individual rating scales or opposing styles, and whether the task's time perspective was manipulated within participants (recall task) or between participants (organizational simulation), we did not find support for our hypotheses. An internal mini meta-analysis indicated that the effect size of the expected interaction between followers' locomotion mode and the task time perspective in predicting leadership style preferences is close to zero. This is surprising given several findings suggesting a strong link between locomotion and time (Amato et al., 2019; Kruglanski et al., 2016).

One reason that might explain these results is the diverse professional background of our participants. In some occupations followers may be quite independent from their leader regarding their task progress. Thus, even for short-term tasks certain followers may feel that they do not need clear directions from their leader to complete their tasks and progress quickly. Indeed, a time task perspective effect on locomotors leadership style preferences may only be present for jobs in which followers are dependent on leaders' quick and decisive decisions, such as among firefighters – who incidentally were subject in Kruglanski et al. (2007). Future work should investigate whether task time perspec-

tive moderates preferences particularly in professions in which followers depend on leaders' decisions and leadership style has immediate implications.

The absence of an interaction effect might also be due to other study features that represent limitations to this research. First, in Studies 1 and 2, participants had to think about tasks they had completed and thus about tasks located in the past. Therefore, even if these tasks originally had different time perspectives, how they were to be accomplished was clear by the time participants responded. As such, participants might have not been able to appreciate how a directive style could have facilitated them moving forward swiftly. Another limitation of our research is that in Study 3 participants, in fact, did not have to work on tasks, which may have reduced their commitment. In turn, a possible effect of time perspective on locomotors' preferences might have been weakened. A possible option for future studies investigating situational features' effect would be having participants really work on a task under the supervision of a leader adopting different leadership behaviors.

Followers' Regulatory Mode Main Effect on their Leadership Preferences

All three studies consistently showed that the higher followers' locomotion mode was, the more they preferred their leader to adopt a participative leadership style. These results are in contradiction with those of Kruglanski and collaborators (2007), showing followers' locomotion mode being associated with a preference for a directive leadership style. However, they replicate results of Beylat and collaborators (2020). They also echo previous findings indicating that locomotion mode is associated with preference for an autonomy-oriented teaching style (Pierro et al., 2009) and with transformational leadership (Benjamin & Flynn, 2006), two styles resembling participative leadership. Followers' locomotion mode may lead them to prefer participative leadership because it does not coerce followers to act in a particular manner, which corresponds with locomotors' higher intrinsic motivation (Pierro et al., 2006b). It is also less likely to interrupt them, fitting locomotors' need to maintain their action flow (Kruglanski et al., 2016). In addition, participative leadership allows followers to take their own decisions, which high locomotors appreciate (Kruglanski et al., 2000; Mugon et al., 2018).

Turning to assessment, the current research could not identify a clear association between followers' assessment mode and their leadership style preferences. Indeed, results of Study 1 show that it relates to preferences for a directive leadership, but with a borderline p value (.045), and this effect did not replicate in Studies 2 & 3, where assessment did not predict any leadership style preferences. However, results from the internal mini meta-analysis again suggest that assessment might be slightly related to preferences for a directive compared to a participative leadership style (r = .07, p = .021). These results are thus ambiguous and difficult to interpret.

On the one hand, if indeed higher followers' assessment mode is related to a preference for directive leadership, this would correspond with previous findings showing students' assessment mode being associated with a preference for a control-oriented teaching style (Pierro et al., 2009), which allows them to have a clear idea on how to do things well. The absence of this effect in Studies 2 and 3 would be due to it being smaller than locomotion main effect, rending these studies underpowered to detect it. On the other hand, it could be that followers' assessment mode is not related to specific preferences regarding leadership style and that this was just chance findings. This would correspond with results from previous work where assessment was also not found to relate to specific leadership styles (Benjamin & Flynn, 2006; Beylat et al., 2020). The at best weak effect may be due to high assessors' concern for self-evaluation, leading them to focus more on how they perform on their own and relying less on their leader to help them succeed. This interpretation dovetails with findings showing that high assessors see collaborations with others more as a responsibility than an opportunity (Scholl et al., 2021). If high assessment indeed leads to greater introspection and lower reliance on one's supervisor leadership style differences might have little importance for high assessors. To shed light on these ambiguous findings, future studies are needed, for instance investigating whether high assessors tend less to rely on their leader or on others to reach their goals.

Task Time Perspective Main Effect on Leadership Style Preferences

Finally, we found a main effect of the task time perspective in Studies 1 and 2, showing that all leadership styles are preferred more for long-term versus short-term tasks. The absence of a task time perspective main effect in Study 3 results is simply due to the change in the dependent measure (opposing leadership styles), which did not allow for observing an increase in preferences for both leadership styles. This task time perspective effect is inconsistent with predictions of House (1996), who argued that a participative style is preferred for clear (here: short-term) tasks, while a directive style is preferred for more abstract (here: long-term) tasks. Instead, the current results suggest that, rather than a specific leadership style, followers might prefer their leader's presence – employing any style – more strongly when pursuing long-term (vs. short-term) tasks. This might be due to long-term objectives tending to be more abstract, more complex, and carry more weight in people's success and careers (Höchli et al., 2018), and therefore may require more guidance.

Contributions

This research contributes to the existing literature on regulatory mode and regulatory fit. Specifically, it establishes a clear association between followers' locomotion mode and preferences for participative leadership, thereby emphasizing the significance of this individual characteristics in understanding leader-follower dynamics. It thus underscores and confirms the results from Beylat et al. (2020), which present similar results but in only one study. In ad-

dition, our findings indicate that this relation holds across different contexts, including when contextual features relevant to locomotion mode vary, such as a task's time perspective. Furthermore, this work highlights that a link between people's assessment mode and leadership style preferences is less clear. This suggest that assessors may fail to benefit from differences in leadership style, even when these styles and according behavior align with their concerns (see also Benjamin & Flynn, 2006). Overall, although this research does not allow to completely resolve inconsistent past findings regarding regulatory mode and leadership preferences, it does clarify that these inconsistencies presumably are not due to the task time perspective and that stable preferences seem to be limited to locomotors.

Additionally, while prior research has underscored participative leadership's benefits, for instance in facilitating employees' innovative work (Mata et al., 2023), our findings suggest that this leadership style may be particularly well-suited to motivating followers high in locomotion but not assessment. Furthermore, our results indicate that for long-term tasks individuals tend to prefer any kind of leadership. In practice, this implies that leaders should be more attentive to their followers when they are working towards long-term goals, as such goals may be more uncertain and challenging.

Conclusion

The current work aimed to test whether a task's time perspective moderates the relation between followers' locomotion mode and their leadership style preferences. Results consistently found locomotion to be associated with a preference for participative leadership, while a relevant task feature to locomotors – the task's time perspective – did not moderate this relation. In addition, no clear link could be identified between followers' assessment mode and their leadership style preferences. Future research could focus on examining the potential benefits of fit between followers' locomotion mode and leaders' participative styles, as well as gaining a deeper understanding of how people's assessment mode may influence (or not) interpersonal dynamics in leadership contexts.

Contributions

Contributed to conception and design: MB, K-AW, KS, VY

Contributed to acquisition of data: MB

Contributed to analysis and interpretation of data: MB, K-AW, KS, VY

Drafted the article: MB

Revised the article: MB, K-AW, KS, VY

Competing Interests

We have no competing interests.

Data Accessibility Statement

All materials, participant data, data codebook, and analysis scripts are available on OSF (https://osf.io/6azq8).

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