PARTICIPATIVE LEADERSHIP AND PROJECT SUCCESS

by

Hunter S. Taylor

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Business Administration

Liberty University, School of Business

December 2018
Abstract

In this non-experimental correlational study, the researcher examines the relationship between participative leadership and project success. The researcher addresses concerns expressed in the literature that project success rates are below a desirable level. The study employed a survey methodology with participants from two professional organizations in North Carolina and South Carolina. The findings demonstrate that participative leadership behaviors and project success rates are significantly correlated, and each factor of participative leadership is significantly correlated with project success. Of the five factors that describe participative leadership: coaching, leading by example, participative decision-making, informing, and concern for the team (Arnold, Arad, Rhoades, & Drasgow, 2000), coaching was found to have the strongest correlation. Employee involvement in decisions has been shown to improve the effectiveness of strategic decisions and overall organizational performance, suggesting the use of participative management strategies may lead to improvements in project success (Carmeli, Sheaffer, & Yitzack Halevi, 2009).

Keywords: project management, participative leadership, empowering leadership, coaching, project success
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Dedication

I dedicate this doctoral study to my family. To my wife and best friend, Stephanie, who has had to take on the responsibilities for two while I was working on this project. You have been right by my side encouraging me through all of this, and I love you and am grateful for you and all you have done. I am sure you never dreamed of a fourteen-year marriage in which your husband would spend the entirety of it furthering his education, but you have been patient and have endured many long nights of my frustrations while you were also dealing with frustrations of your own. My words cannot express how much I appreciate and love you.

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Acknowledgements

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## Table of Contents

List of Tables .......................................................................................................................... xi

List of Figures .......................................................................................................................... xii

Section 1: Foundation of the Study ......................................................................................... 1

  Background of the Problem .................................................................................................. 1

  Problem Statement ............................................................................................................. 4

  Purpose Statement ............................................................................................................. 5

  Nature of the Study ............................................................................................................ 6

    Discussion of Methods ..................................................................................................... 6

    Quantitative Design Selection ......................................................................................... 7

  Research Questions and Hypothesis .................................................................................... 9

    Hypotheses ...................................................................................................................... 9

  Theoretical Framework ....................................................................................................... 10

    Contingency Theory ........................................................................................................ 10

    Situational Leadership Theory ....................................................................................... 11

    Participative Model of Decision-Making ......................................................................... 12

  Project Success .................................................................................................................. 14

    Discussion of Relationships Between Theories and Variables ..................................... 15

  Definitions of Terms .......................................................................................................... 17

  Assumptions, Limitations, Delimitations .......................................................................... 17
Assumptions......................................................................................................................... 17

Limitations ......................................................................................................................... 18

Delimitations ...................................................................................................................... 18

Significance of the Study ................................................................................................. 18

Reduction of Gaps .............................................................................................................. 19

Implications for Biblical Integration .................................................................................. 20

Relationship to Field of Study ........................................................................................... 21

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature .................................................... 22

Participative Leadership History ....................................................................................... 23

Scientific management ...................................................................................................... 23

The behavioral movement ................................................................................................. 25

Autocratic and democratic leadership ................................................................................. 27

The contingency approach ................................................................................................. 27

The participative decision-making model ........................................................................... 28

Benefits of Participative Leadership .................................................................................. 30

Employee engagement ...................................................................................................... 30

Organizational change ...................................................................................................... 33

Performance ...................................................................................................................... 35

Decision acceptance .......................................................................................................... 38

Knowledge sharing and risk reduction .............................................................................. 40
Stakeholder participation ................................................................. 41
Motivation .......................................................................................... 41
Appropriateness of Participative Leadership ........................................... 42
Organizational tenure diversity ............................................................ 42
Personality of project manager ............................................................. 43
Follower readiness .............................................................................. 45
Project Success .................................................................................... 47
Project efficiency .................................................................................. 48
Impact on the customer .......................................................................... 48
Impact on the team ................................................................................ 49
Business and direct Success ................................................................. 49
Preparing for the future ........................................................................ 49
Research Tools ..................................................................................... 50
The Empowering Leadership Questionnaire (ELQ) .................................... 50
Uses of the ELQ .................................................................................... 52
The Project Success Assessment Questionnaire (PSAQ) ............................. 53
Transition and Summary ....................................................................... 54
Section 2: The Project .......................................................................... 55
Purpose Statement ................................................................................. 55
Role of the Researcher .......................................................................... 56
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Method and Design</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Method</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Design</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population and Sampling</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instruments</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ELQ</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The PSAQ</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection Technique</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Organization Techniques</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variables Used in the Study</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypothesis and Variables</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliability and Validity</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Validity</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview of the Study</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PARTICIPATIVE LEADERSHIP AND PROJECT SUCCESS

Presentation of the Findings ................................................................................................................. 79

Hypothesis 1: Overall Participative Leadership and Project Success ................................................. 88

Hypothesis 2: The Factors of Participative Leadership and Project Success ................................. 89

Summary of the Findings ..................................................................................................................... 90

Applications to Professional Practice ................................................................................................. 91

Recommendations for Action .............................................................................................................. 95

Recommendations for Further Study ................................................................................................. 97

Reflections ........................................................................................................................................... 99

Summary and Study Conclusions ....................................................................................................... 102

References .......................................................................................................................................... 104

Appendix A: The Survey ..................................................................................................................... 125

Appendix B: Permission to use the ELQ ......................................................................................... 126

Appendix C: Permission to use the PSAQ ...................................................................................... 127

Appendix D: Organization Permission – NCPTPMI ................................................................. 128

Appendix E: Organization Permission – Carolinas AGC .............................................................. 129

Appendix F: Liberty University Institutional Review Board Approval Notice ................................ 130

Appendix G: Informed Consent .......................................................................................................... 131
List of Tables

Table 1. Variables Used in the Study........................................................................................................74
Table 2. Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test of Normality .................................................................................81
Table 3. Skewness and Kurtosis for the Independent and Dependent Variables...............................82
Table 4. Case Processing Summary...........................................................................................................83
Table 5. Hypothesis 1 Results..................................................................................................................85
Table 6. Hypothesis 2 Results..................................................................................................................88
List of Figures

Figure 1. Relationships Between Theories and Variables. .......................................................... 16
Figure 2. Vroom and Yetton Model............................................................................................. 29
Figure 3. Participative Leadership Histogram ............................................................................ 82
Figure 4. Project Success Histogram .......................................................................................... 82
Figure 5. Boxplots for Project Success and Leadership Style .................................................. 83
Figure 6. Simple Scatter of Project Success by Leadership Style ............................................ 85
Figure 7. Simple Scatterplots of Each Independent Variable by Project Success ................. 87
Section 1: Foundation of the Study

The foundation of the study contains background information necessary to understand the general problem of lower than desired project success rates. The problem to be addressed is that the leadership style used in a project may not be appropriate to guide the project to a successful conclusion. Leadership is an area that has received minimal attention in the context of temporary organizations (Raziq, Borini, Malik, Ahmad, & Shabaz, 2018; Tyssen, Wald, & Spieth, 2013; Zimmerer & Yasin, 1998), yet may play a vital role in the project success (Jiang, 2014). In this quantitative, correlational study, the researcher examines the relationship between participative leadership and project success. This section concludes with an academic literature review on participative leadership, autocratic leadership, and project success.

Background of the Problem

Project success is vital to an organization’s health and competitive position. Project managers are evaluated based on the success of their projects (Ika, 2009), though project success is a concept which experts have been unable to precisely define (Aga, Noorderhaven, & Vallejo, 2016). For example, from the 1960’s through the 1980’s, cost, time, and scope have been the most important considerations in the determination of project success (Ika, 2015), but current success standards are inclusive of other factors. Aga et al. (2016) note that other project success factors include benefit to the organization, satisfaction of the end user, stakeholder benefit, sustainability, and achievement of the strategic objectives of the organization. Müller and Jugdev (2012) explain that success is measured by subjective judgments formed by the roles and worldviews of individuals within an organization. The research indicates a clear definition of success would be desirable, but the subjective nature of project success will likely prohibit a concrete definition. Many researchers suggest that the definition of success varies depending on
the project and institution (Müller & Jugdev, 2012; Rolstadås, Ralf Müller, Tommelein, Morten Schiefloe, & Ballard, 2014).

The Project Management Institute defines project success as “completing a project within the constraints of scope, time, cost, quality, resources, and risk as approved between the project managers and senior management” (PMI, 2013, p. 35). Williams (2016) noted that both research and practice are shifting toward objective and subjective measures of project success. Project success, therefore, is a combination of the objective measures of the iron triangle (cost, time, and scope) and the more subjective measures of stakeholder satisfaction (Baker, Murphey, & Fisher, 1988; Müller & Jugdev, 2012). Baker et al. (1988) identified the latter as the factor that is most important over the long term.

Traditional measures of cost, time, and scope indicate project success rates are below an acceptable level despite a vast amount of research in improvement methods (Joslin & Müller, 2016). The undesirable success rate is a problem that transcends the boundaries of any specific industry. For example, Rivera and Kashiwagi (2016) note that only 2.5% of construction projects are successful in terms of scope, budget, and schedule. Information technology projects fare only slightly better, with less than a 30% success rate (Pan, Hackney, & Pan, 2008). As a whole, only 44% of all projects are completed on time and within schedule, which suggests the need to determine the factors that influence project success (Izmailov, Korneva, & Kozhemiaakin, 2016).

Research indicates many factors play a crucial role in project success. Baker et al. (1988) identified ten project success factors: project mission, schedule and plans, personnel, client acceptance, communication, top management support, client consultation, technical tasks, monitoring and feedback, and troubleshooting. Noticeably missing from the list is leadership, a
factor Jiang (2014) suggests should be given more consideration in project success. Zimmerer and Yasin (1998) noted that project leaders and project managers consistently rank project leadership as the most crucial factor in project success. Similarly, Müller and Turner (2010) found appropriate leadership improves organizational performance.

Project management poses application problems for conventional leadership theories. A key explanation may be the temporary nature of project management. Much of the research on leadership is more appropriate for a more permanent environment (Tyssen, Wald, & Spieth, 2013). Project management teams often come together from different parts of the organization and only work together for the duration of the project. Tyssen, Wald, and Spieth (2013) explained that the influence of leadership is not completely understood in temporary organizations and that many of the findings are limited to specific settings and cannot be generalized across all fields of project management.

Participative leadership consists of encouraging the contribution of ideas from employees at all levels within the organization (Linski, 2014). Employees share in setting organizational goals, problem-solving, and in decisions that affect the organization (Linski, 2014). Participative leadership contrasts with an autocratic leadership, a style in which leaders make decisions without concern for employee input or feedback (Bergquist & Mura, 2011). Participatory leadership has been shown to improve decision-making processes and organizational effectiveness in the organizational context (Carmeli et al., 2009). However, an autocratic style leads to faster decision-making, suggesting that more time sensitive projects require an autocratic style for effective leadership (Tyssen, Wald, & Spieth, 2013).

Effective participative management cannot be achieved solely by asking employees for their input in decisions. It must also be ingrained in the culture of the organization (Parnell &
Crandall, 2001). Organizations that develop innovative cultures, encourage employees to take risks, and develop new ideas are more likely to benefit from participative management (Park, Lee, & Kim, 2015). Participative management will lead to improved decision-making, which may lead to an increase in overall project success.

**Problem Statement**

The general problem to be addressed is that project success rates fall below an acceptable level. Rivera and Kashiwagi (2016) estimate 60% of construction projects are over budget and over schedule and often fail to meet the specifications of the customer. Izmailov et al. (2016) found that only 44% of projects are completed on time, while the 70% of projects that are on schedule accomplish this through the amount of planned work. Projects that do not meet schedule, budget, or customer expectations result in rework that is an estimated 2 to 20% of the budget and an estimated $4 to $12 billion annually to resolve customer claims and disputes (Rivera & Kashiwagi, 2016).

Weare (2014) found that 75% of problems encountered in projects result from institutional practices rather than the challenges of the project itself. One important facet of institutional practices is the leadership within the organization and the project. Jiang (2014) suggests leadership style is an area that does not receive adequate attention in project success research despite surveys indicating leadership is one of the most important determining factors of project success (Zimmerer & Yasin, 1998).

Project managers make critical decisions throughout the life of the project and must ensure that team members understand expectations (Patanakul, Pinto, & Pinto, 2016). The importance of these decisions suggests leadership ability and style may be an important contributor to project success. Carmeli et al. (2009) found employee involvement in decisions
increased the effectiveness of strategic decisions and improved overall organizational performance, indicating the use of participative management strategies may lead to improvements in project success. Research suggests participative management may be inhibited by the constraints inherent in time-sensitive projects, indicating managers revert to an autocratic style when faced with deadlines that do not allow sufficient time for consensus building (Tyssen, Wald, & Spieth, 2013). The propensity to change to an autocratic leadership style suggests organization and project leaders are willing to trade better decisions for timely decisions, and these suboptimal decisions may be a contributing factor to lower project success rates. The specific problem to be addressed is that project managers do not recognize that their leadership style may not lead to project success (L. Yang, Huang, & Wu, 2011).

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this quantitative correlational study is to add to the body of knowledge in project management leadership by examining the influence participative leadership has on project success. There is minimal research available that addresses the influence of leadership in temporary organizations (Turner & Müller, 2005). The lack of focus on leadership styles in temporary organizations, such as those in project management, has created a gap in the literature.

The researcher seeks to examine the relationship of leadership style to project success to determine how the chosen style influences project success. Benoliel and Somech (2014) suggested that participative leaders create a cohesive environment that maximizes individual contribution. This participative leadership study will be beneficial in explaining the types of leadership, and thus the types of actions project managers should take to increase the likelihood of project success.
Nature of the Study

In this correlational quantitative study, a survey method will be employed to determine project managers’ and project team members’ perception of leadership as they relate to participative leadership (independent variable) and their influence on project success (the dependent variable). Creswell (2014) explains that quantitative research is the best method to use when identifying factors that influence or predict an outcome. Blackstone (2012) noted that the benefits of the survey method include the ability to efficiently generate a large amount of data at a relatively low cost and can allow the researcher to ascertain information about the population from a smaller sample. The survey method will provide a sufficient amount of data to analyze and examine the leadership styles of project managers to determine the role each has in project success. Creswell (2014) explains that quantitative studies are best when a researcher seeks to verify or refute a narrow hypothesis. Identifying the relationships of leadership styles to project success is best done with a quantitative study in which the researcher can examine the influence that the independent variable, leadership style, has on the dependent variable, project success.

Discussion of Methods

Alternatively, a qualitative study would be appropriate for describing the leadership styles of the project manager and may provide insight into additional areas of study. A qualitative study would be useful in developing a detailed understanding the complexities of choosing an appropriate management style for each situation. Creswell (2018) explains a qualitative method is useful when the researcher wants to understand the contexts and the environments in which the problem exists. Qualitative research could be used to further understand the complexities of the issues involved in leadership, but there are limitations
involved in analyzing the influence a particular variable has on another (Creswell, 2014). Leavy (2017) suggests the chosen method should fit the research questions. A qualitative method does not fit the research question in this study, as the researcher seeks to examine the relationship between two variables. In this study, it is appropriate to use a quantitative method to fit the research question and examine the influence that participative leadership has on project success.

**Quantitative Design Selection**

The researcher considered several designs before determining the correlational method was most appropriate. For example, A quasi-experimental design is used to test a hypothesis by manipulating the independent variable to examine how it impacts the dependent variable. Quasi-experimental designs are similar to true experimental designs except quasi-experimental designs do not contain random groups and controlled environments (Tharenou, Donohue, & Cooper, 2007). Causal inferences can be drawn from quasi-experiments and the design is effective in situations where a true experiment is not practical or ethical (Tharenou et al., 2007). A quasi-experimental design can be used to test this hypothesis, but it would be difficult, if not impossible, to control for other project success factors. For this reason, the researcher did not choose the quasi-experimental design.

A descriptive, or observational style, is used when the researcher does not wish to make changes or manipulate the independent variable, but instead seeks to describe the variable the way that it is (Tharenou et al., 2007). Descriptive designs are beneficial because they allow the researcher to collect large amounts of data and identify variables that require further testing (Tharenou et al., 2007). Descriptive designs cannot be used to establish a correlation between variables (Creswell, 2014). Therefore, a descriptive design is not appropriate for the research questions.
The researcher chose a correlational study to examine if there is a relationship between leadership style and project success. A correlational study is used to determine the relationship between variables but does not establish cause-and-effect (Terrell, 2016). The correlational study would be able to determine if leadership style and project success are correlated and is the appropriate method to use to answer the research questions.

The data will be obtained using two survey instruments: the Project Success Assessment Questionnaire (PSAQ), and the Empowering Leadership Questionnaire (ELQ). The PSAQ, used to measure project success, measures five factors of project success: (1) efficiency, (2) impact on the customer, (3) impact on the team, (4) preparing for the future, and (5) business and direct organizational success (Shenhar, Milosevic, Dvir, & Thamhain, 2007). The ELQ, used to measure participative leadership, contains 38 survey questions that are used to assess five factors of empowering leadership: (1) coaching, (2) leading by example, (3) participative decision-making, (4) informing, and (5) showing concern and interaction with the team (Arnold et al., 2000).

The Project Success Assessment Questionnaire (PSAQ), will be used to measure project success, the dependent variable. This survey was originated by Shenhar and Dvir (2007) as a means to broaden the definition of project success from strictly time, budget, and scope. Shenhar and Dvir considered five additional aspects of project success: (1) efficiency, (2) customer impact, (3) impact on the team, (4) direct business and organizational success, and (5) preparation for the future. Participants, however, are only asked to consider the first three dimensions using a 4-point Likert scale ranged from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree” with a fifth option of “not applicable.” The researcher asked participants to consider the leadership and the success on a project that had been completed within the past two years. Shenhar, Dvir,
Levy, and Maltz (2001) note that the last two factors, direct business/organizational success and preparation for the future, require a longer period of time to pass before they can be assessed accurately. Since direct business/organizational success and preparation for the future are long-term factors, the researcher only asked participants to only consider the first three dimensions in their assessment of project success. Therefore, it is possible that a project viewed as unsuccessful today may prove to be successful in the long term and this limitation should be considered in reviewing the results of this study. The instrument is a valid and reliable survey tool to measure project success (Ahmed & bin Mohamad, 2016; Assudani & Kloppenborg, 2010; Nwagbogwu, 2011).

The Empowering Leadership Questionnaire (ELQ), was developed by Arnold et al. (2000) to measure five categories of leader empowerment. These items include leading by example, coaching, encouraging, participative decision making, and interaction with the team (Arnold et al., 2000). The five-point scale measures the degree to which the supervisor considers the input of subordinates and listens to their ideas and concerns (Newman, Rose, & Teo, 2016). The ELQ is a valid tool to measure participative leadership behavior and is reliable, showing a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of 0.84 (X. Huang, Shi, Zhang, & Cheung, 2006).

Research Questions and Hypothesis

1. What, if any, relationship exists between participative leadership, measured by the Empowering Leadership Questionnaire, and project success, measured by the PSAQ?

Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no statistically significant relationship between overall participative leadership and project success.
**H₁**: A statistically significant relationship exists between overall participative leadership and project success.

**H₀**: There is no statistically significant relationship between project success and coaching, leading by example, participative decision-making, informing, and leader-team interaction.

**H₂**: There is a statistically significant relationship between project success and coaching, leading by example, participative decision-making, informing, and leader-team interaction.

**Theoretical Framework**

This research is framed by three leadership theories that influence the achievement of goals and team motivation. The theoretical foundation for this study is comprised of the contingency theory, the situational leadership theory, and the participative decision-making model. These theories suggest that characteristics of leaders and their followers determine the appropriate leadership style. The leadership style, in turn, influences the amount of stakeholder input into the project, which may affect project success.

**Contingency Theory**

The contingency theory explains that there is not one best way to lead and that the appropriate leadership style is the style that fits the situation (Kessler, 2013). Fiedler (1967) developed the contingency model after surveying leaders concerning their feelings toward their least preferred coworker (LPC), a term used to describe the coworker that the leader works with least well (Kessler, 2013). The leaders who rated their LPCs most favorably were considered to be more relationship oriented, while the leaders that assigned lower ratings to their LPCs were considered task-oriented (Fiedler, 1967).
Fiedler found that task orientation and relationship orientation alone did not explain leadership effectiveness and thus began to examine the situation in which each was applied (Fiedler, 1967). Fielder argued that leadership effectiveness depends on two factors: (1) the leader’s personality, and (2) the situation. The contingency model explains that there is not a single best way to lead an organization or work team, but that the most appropriate leadership style is the style that fits the situation (Kessler, 2013).

This perspective of contingency theory identifies with the field of project management. Project management studies produce a variety of findings that give weight to the idea that the project management style and the situation affect project outcomes (Teller, Kock, & Gemünden, 2014). Contingency theory consists of the idea that leaders must respond to the situation, suggesting that project managers must respond to unforeseen changes in the project and the competitive environment. Also, contingency theory consists of the idea that the leader’s personality is important. In project management, the leader’s personality will affect how he responds to risks, how he communicates, and how his leadership style drives overall team performance (Thamhain, 2012).

**Situational Leadership Theory**

The situational leadership theory builds upon the contingency theory by considering another factor, the readiness of the follower (Blanchard & Hersey, 1996). In the situational leadership theory, Blanchard and Hersey (1996) explain that leadership style effectiveness depends on the level of follower readiness. Follower readiness is a term that describes the motivational level and the competency of an employee, or how “ready willing, and able” a follower is to complete an assigned task (Blanchard & Hersey, 1996, p. 46). Blank, Weitzel,
Blau, and Green (1988) described follower readiness as psychological maturity, indicating that mature followers are ready, willing, and self-motivated to accomplish the work task.

Situational leadership theory contends that effective leadership requires the leader to assess follower readiness and adopt one of four leadership styles: participating, selling, delegating, and telling (Blanchard & Hersey, 1996). Blanchard and Hersey (1996) explain that situational theory is more about the leader meeting the needs of his followers than it is about leadership, and the effectiveness of each of these management styles is dependent on the level of competence, initiative, and confidence of the follower. For example, if a follower is highly confident and has the knowledge and abilities to complete the task, then “delegating”, a low task and low relationship leadership style, would be most effective (Blanchard & Hersey, 1996). By contrast, newly hired employees must develop confidence and increase their knowledge and skill levels before they will be comfortable with the delegation style of leadership. In this situation, a “telling” management style is more appropriate. As followers progress and gain more knowledge and confidence, the leadership style must also evolve for the leader to remain effective (Blanchard & Hersey, 1996).

**Participative Model of Decision-Making**

The participative model of decision making (PDM) explains different situations influence the extent to which managers should engage in a participatory approach to management (Kessler, 2013). A participatory approach creates an environment in which each team member has the opportunity to share ideas and perspectives to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the team (Kessler, 2013). PDM has been shown to have a positive influence on employee satisfaction, organizational commitment (Scott-Ladd, Travaglione, & Marshall, 2006), organizational effectiveness (Macy, Peterson, & Norton, 1989), and job performance (Buch &
Spangler, 1990; Sukirno & Siengthai, 2011). Additionally, Carmeli et al. (2009) found the use of PDM to be positively correlated with strategic decision effectiveness and improved organizational performance.

Lewis and Russ (2011) explained two factors that determine the degree to which managers use PDM: fidelity goals and resource orientation. Fidelity is a measurement of management’s propensity to view the success of a change implementation process regarding their preconceived ideas of how that change will take place (Lewis & Russ, 2011). Managers with high fidelity desire that the actual result matches the intended result. Lewis and Russ (2011) explained that high fidelity managers view the expected outcome as the benchmark of success of a program but do not consider alternative methods that may improve the outcomes. Low fidelity managers believe that the original plan may have to evolve, and they measure success by accomplishments. A low fidelity orientation indicates an acceptance that the actual outcome may be an improvement over the intended outcome and consideration of stakeholder input is warranted to ensure that the best methods are taken to achieve the optimal result.

Resource orientation is a measurement of the degree to which managers view the value of the input of stakeholders. Managers with a high resource orientation will embrace the contribution of team members because they believe that each perspective will lead to improvements in decision making and organizational strategy. By contrast, managers who have a low resource orientation seek input from stakeholders, but then take no real action based on that feedback (Kessler, 2013). The request for input is only symbolic, as low resource orientation managers view input requests as a way to give the appearance that they are engaged in a participatory management style (Kessler, 2013).
**Project Success**

Project success is a multifaceted concept that is difficult to universally define due to the subjective nature of project success (Ika, 2009). Ika (2015) acknowledged the generally accepted dimensions of project success are time, cost, and scope, or the “iron triangle.” However, the subjective nature of project management success has led researchers to suggest that these three factors, though important, are not the only criteria required for a successful project (Ika, 2009). A key point in the project management literature is this lack of a definitive measure of project success. Therefore, researchers have turned to critical success factors and success criteria to define project success (Ika, 2009).

Shenhar and Dvir (2007) identified five major dimensions for project success: (1) project efficiency, (2) impact on the customer, (3) impact on the team (4) business and direct success, and (5) preparing for the future. Project efficiency explains the degree to which a project met the time and cost requirements (Ika, 2009; Shenhar et al., 2001). The second success dimension, impact on the customer, relates to meeting the performance requirements of the customer (Shenhar et al., 2001). A successful project must meet the technical specifications, functional performance level, and the needs of the customer (Shenhar et al., 2001). Business success is the third dimension of project success (Shenhar et al., 2001). A project must contribute to the financial and strategic goals of the organization to be considered a success. A project that increases a firm’s market share, improves manufacturing processes, or increases profit is an example of the business success dimension (Shenhar et al., 2001). Finally, the fifth dimension, preparing for the future, relates to the creation of new skills, products, and business opportunities (Shenhar et al., 2001).
Discussion of Relationships Between Theories and Variables

This study, informed by the contingency theory, situational leadership theory, and the participative model of decision making, examines the influence of leadership style on project success. The independent variable, leadership style, is a function of the personality of the project manager, the type of project, and follower readiness. Leader personality influences the resource orientation, which is a factor in the level of stakeholder input, the intermediate variable. The dependent variable of project success can be measured by project efficiency, impact on the customer, impact on the team, business success, and preparing for the future (Shenhar et al., 2001).

In this study, the researcher examined the degree that a chosen leadership style influences project success. The independent variable, leadership style, asks participants to evaluate the project managers participative behaviors on 38 items on a five-point scale on 38 items. A higher score on the scale indicates that the employees perceive a more participative leadership, whereas lower scores indicate a perception of an autocratic leader.

Participative leadership requires the project manager to have a resource orientation and low fidelity goals (Kessler, 2013). Participative leaders value the input from stakeholders (resource orientation) and expect that the intended outcome can be improved or achieved through different approaches (low fidelity). Autocratic leaders may give the appearance of valuing employee input, but ultimately make the decisions themselves without consideration of that input (task orientation) and discourage deviation from the original plan (high fidelity) (Kessler, 2013).

The dependent variable, project success, is measured with the Project Success Assessment Questionnaire (PSAQ). The PSAQ, developed by Shenhar and Dvir (2007), measures project success with five dimensions: project efficiency, impact on the customer/user,
impact on the team, impact on business and organizational success, and preparing for the future (Shenhar & Dvir, 2007). Each of these five categories is comprised of survey questions that further define these dimensions. For example, the “impact on the team” dimension contains six survey questions to determine the team’s perception of their overall motivation, project loyalty, team morale, and personal growth. Each survey question contains a four-point scale ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree,” with “not applicable” as a fifth choice. The selections will be quantified for analysis, using four for answers that indicate “strongly agree” and one for “strongly disagree.” The researcher averaged the resulting scores. Higher scores are indicative of elevated levels of project success and lower scores indicate a lower level of success.

The study, informed by the contingency theory, situational leadership theory, participative decision-making model, and the project success dimensions defined by Shenhar and Dvir (2007), uses two valid and reliable survey instruments, the ELQ and the PSAQ, to examine the relationship between project leadership and project success. The correlation between these variables will be tested with a bivariate analysis.

Figure 1. Relationships between theories and variables.
Definitions of Terms

**Autocratic leadership.** A leadership style characterized by control with all decisions made with little to no input from the group. Autocratic leadership is also referred to as authoritarian leadership (Kessler, 2013).

**Fidelity Goals.** The degree of importance that managers ascribe to the process and the result. High fidelity managers will resist changes to the original plan, while low fidelity managers will adjust processes to reach the intended result (Kessler, 2013).

**Participative leadership.** A leadership style characterized by collaboration between leaders and their subordinates. Leaders seek input from team members on decisions and attempt to reach consensus (Kessler, 2013).

**Resource orientation.** The degree that managers value the input of their subordinates. High resource orientation indicates a propensity to seek input from subordinates, while a low resource orientation indicates little to no regard for the input of others (Kessler, 2013).

Assumptions, Limitations, Delimitations

**Assumptions**

The primary assumption is that leadership styles that are effective in permanent organizations can be generalized to project management. For example, Tyssen, Wald, and Spieth (2013) indicate that the temporary nature of project management teams may pose challenges to implementing participatory leadership practices. Another assumption is that project team members in the study will answer the survey questions in a way that accurately depicts their perception of their manager’s chosen leadership style. Another assumption is that the survey participants will be truthful in their survey responses about the level and nature of their position within the firm. The online survey will not provide the researcher the means to
verify that all participants have the positions and roles in the organizations that they claim.

Finally, there is an assumption that the researcher’s bias is minimalized. The anonymity
involved in the online survey will help minimize researcher bias and protect the identity of the
survey participants.

Limitations

This study is limited to members and affiliates of the North Carolina Piedmont Triad
Chapter of the Project Management Institute (NCPTPMI) and members of the Carolinas AGC.
The researcher will examine only two types of leadership, autocratic and participative, in the
context of project management. There may be other leadership styles that are relevant to
understanding the role that leaders play in project success, but this study will focus solely on
these two styles. The ability to generalize the results to larger populations may also be a
limitation, as this study focuses on project management in North and South Carolina which will
exclude other locations that may also be relevant to a study on participative management.

Delimitations

This research is limited to the NCPTPMI and the Carolinas AGC, which limits the
findings to the geographic region of North and South Carolina. The sample pool is limited to
team members who work in project management businesses in this region. The findings of this
study may not apply to regions outside North and South Carolina. Therefore, the results may not
be generalizable to other states and regions.

Significance of the Study

An increase in knowledge of the factors that lead to project success is important to
project-based organizations (Aga et al., 2016). Project managers and project teams rate
leadership as the most important factor in project success (Zimmerer & Yasin, 1998). However,
there has been relatively little empirical research that examines the relationship between leadership style and project success (Raziq et al., 2018).

The results of this research may help projectized institutions understand and develop leadership behaviors that foster project success. This research will be beneficial in building and implementing management training programs that help project managers implement leadership styles that align with the preferences of the team they are leading (X. Huang, Iun, Liu, & Gong, 2010). This study may also provide firms with a metric to determine the characteristics they should seek in the hiring and promotion of future project managers, as finding talented employees is a major concern facing businesses today (Newman et al., 2016).

**Reduction of Gaps**

The purpose of this study is to address a gap in project management and leadership literature by examining the influence of participative leadership in a temporary project management environment. Barnard (1938) was the first to suggest that participative leadership would enhance subordinate performance. His theory has further been expanded and developed by many researchers, with most of this research based on permanent organizational structures (Shamir, 2011). Permanent organizations have leader-follower relationships that are more continuous and stable (Shamir, 2011). Shamir (2011) explains that time required for developing leadership is limited in temporary organizations. Temporary organizations are work groups that complete assigned tasks with predetermined durations of work that falls outside of the normal work of the firm (Ding, Li, Zhang, Sheng, & Wang, 2017). These temporary organizations include projects, programs, task forces, and teams that collaborate until the work task is complete, then disband to return to their normal work or another project (Tyssen, Wald, & Spieth, 2013). A focus on the project management benefits of participative project leadership
will develop the body of knowledge by examining the influence of participative leadership on success in a temporary project environment.

**Implications for Biblical Integration**

Leadership is one of the most important factors in project success and in furthering the Kingdom of God on the Earth. Christian project managers are called to make important decisions and to plan for the future (Keller & Allsdorf, 2014). In business relationships, Christian leaders must allow others to participate in meaningful work to develop to their full potential (2010). Through participative leadership, project managers will provide the support and encouragement that may allow employees to find and use their talents to realize their God-given purpose.

Christ’s leadership style is an example of participative leadership. Jesus had the authority and power to make decisions and lead with an autocratic style, but instead chose participative leadership as the best method for spreading the gospel. Jesus appointed twelve disciples to work closely with him to preach the message throughout the world (Mark 3:14, New International Version). Just as Jesus called His disciples, He also calls Christians today to follow Him, yet He allows His followers to decide whether to accept and follow Him.

The Bible explains the importance of listening to counsel from those who have knowledge and wisdom. “Where there is no guidance, a people falls, but in an abundance of counselors there is safety” (Proverbs 11:14, English Standard Version). For a project manager, this includes the stakeholders of the project, who may have expertise and insight about the business environment or the project that is relevant to an important project decision. The inherent uncertainty in project management may benefit from a leadership style that adequately considers the experience and perceptions of all involved and is consistent with biblical teachings.
Relationship to Field of Study

Project management is a field that requires effective leadership practices (Zimmerer & Yasin, 1998). There have been many studies on the benefits of transformational leadership (Aga et al., 2016), yet few have focused on the influence of participative leadership. Research that further addresses the influence of participative leadership is beneficial, as it will increase the leader’s awareness of his leadership style and the degree to which it influences project success. Transformational leadership focuses on achieving goals and promoting unity, while participative leadership engages employees, increases flexibility, and promotes self-leadership (Kruglanski, Pierro, & Higgins, 2007).

The results of this study may be used to further the understanding of leadership styles in temporary environments. Project success rates are lower than desired (Rivera & Kashiwagi, 2016; Wearne, 2014) and leadership is considered an important factor in project success (Zimmerer & Yasin, 1998). However, there have been few studies that examine the relationship of leadership to project success (Raziq et al., 2018). This study will be beneficial to the project community in developing an understanding of leadership styles and their influence on project success.
A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The subject of leadership has received substantial attention in the literature, most notably in permanent and stable work environments (Tyssen, Wald, & Spieth, 2013). Leadership has become an increasingly important consideration in today’s business climate, where firms must quickly adapt to changing work conditions and continually develop new technologies to remain competitive (Sharma & Kirkman, 2015; Tyssen, Wald, & Heidenreich, 2013; Tyssen, Wald, &Spieth, 2013). Organizations that empower their employees through participative leadership are more likely to outperform peer companies and develop competencies that place the company in a better position for future markets (Sharma & Kirkman, 2015).

Over the past decade, the literature reflects that there have been numerous attempts to define the leadership characteristics that influence project success (Jiang, 2014; Müller & Turner, 2010; Trivellas & Drimoussis, 2013). In addition, there are many variables used to determine project success, but it is generally accepted that successful project management includes meeting the time, cost, and scope of the project as well as stakeholder expectations (Aga et al., 2016).

In this review, the researcher analyzes the existing literature in leadership and its influence on the dimensions of organizational performance. The review begins with a history of participative management and progresses through the advantages and disadvantages of the leadership style and the appropriateness of the style. Using the contingency and situational leadership approaches, the researcher examines the literature on the appropriateness of the participative management style and how the leader’s personality, the maturity level of the followers, and the situation all influence the effectiveness of the chosen leadership style. Finally, the review concludes with the summary of the methods used to measure project success and comparison of each.
Participative Leadership History

There has been a substantial amount of research in leadership, but most has centered on the leader rather than the followers (Uhl-Bien, Riggio, Lowe, & Carsten, 2014). A leader-centered view suggests that effective leaders must set goals and direct followers toward goal achievement (Bass, 2008). However, there are many benefits to a participative approach, such as employee satisfaction, productivity gains, increased motivation, and increased commitment to the organization (Fatima, Majeed, & Saeed, 2017). In the following section, the researcher describes the history of the participative leadership research and addresses the benefits of the approach.

Scientific management. The origin of participative management can be arguably traced back to Frederick Taylor (Shagholi & Hussin, 2009), who is considered “the father of scientific management.” Shagholi and Hussin (2009) credit Taylor with laying the groundwork for participative leadership; however, some argue that participative management is the exact opposite from Taylor’s ideas (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). Taylor relied on worker cooperation with management, but not in the same way that modern participative management is viewed. Taylor (1911) believed there was one correct way to accomplish a task, and the focus of his studies was finding the most efficient and effective methods of completing a task and ensuring that workers adhered to the guidelines. The four principles of Taylor’s method were (1) creating efficient jobs, (2) decreasing loafing on the job (a term Taylor (1911, p. 13) described as “soldiering”), (3) improving work attitudes, and (4) worker-manager cooperation (Shagholi & Hussin, 2009).

Although scientific management is directive by nature, Taylor believed that workers and management have mutual goals that encourage them to work together (Locke, 1982). Taylor suggested friction develops between managers, who want higher productivity and low wages,
and workers, who wish to be paid well and not worked to the point of exhaustion (Derkson, 2014). To resolve this friction, workers need to develop positive interpersonal relationships with managers (Derkson, 2014). Under Taylor’s system, worker collaboration was mostly limited to the workers informing managers if they discovered a more efficient method of performing a task (Derkson, 2014). The premise of Taylor’s scientific management approach was that workers disliked work, which required managers to create productivity incentives to keep the workers producing at the expected output level (Derkson, 2014).

Taylor’s view of worker-management cooperation is quite different than the view of participative management today. Taylor did not advocate for workers to participate in decisions, he believed they did not have the knowledge to understand how to do their jobs in the “one best way” (Taylor, 1911, p. 106). Therefore, workers were expected to participate by sharing their ideas with management, but management would simply overrule workers if they did not deem their suggestions to be useful (Locke, 1982).

Taylor’s authoritarian approach stressed obedience to authority and separated the mental from the physical work in an effort to improve efficiency and increase productivity (Daft & Marcic, 2017). Taylor believed that separating the functions of physical and mental labor was required because the typical worker lacked cognitive capabilities and needed directive managers to keep them on task (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). Although there is some indication that Taylor understood the importance of participation between management and subordinates, the main criticism of his approach is that it failed to consider the human aspect of management (Locke, 1982) and that he was predisposed to the notion that workers were uninformed and lacked knowledge in the ways to complete work tasks (Daft & Marcic, 2017).
The behavioral movement. The Hawthorne studies marked a change in management thought from the approach of Taylor. In the Western Electric factory in Hawthorne, Illinois in the 1920’s, researchers conducted a series of studies to test the influence of physical work conditions on employee productivity (Sundstrom, McIntyre, Halfhill, & Richards, 2000). Workers in the Hawthorne plant were exposed to different lighting levels, as well as other work environment changes, to determine if their productivity changed as a result of the altered work conditions. After the researchers noticed the unexpected observations of the development of social interactions, they changed their focus to a study of the relationships of workers and management (Sundstrom et al., 2000). Although the studies were criticized as flawed due to many uncontrolled variables, the key finding of the study was that worker productivity increased because of the special attention the workers received from being a part of the experiment (Wickström & Bendix, 2000).

The Hawthorne studies led to the development of the human relations movement, or the belief that human behavior should be unbridled, not controlled, to increase both efficiency and innovation (Ionescu & Negrusa, 2013). The researchers found that employees were most satisfied by the relationships they developed with each other (Ionescu & Negrusa, 2013). The Hawthorne studies began to lay the groundwork for participative management. The studies suggested that meeting the needs of employees and including employees in decision making is more important to productivity than working conditions or financial incentives. The lessons learned from the Hawthorne experiments is that followers feel valued when they have a sympathetic manager that responds to their needs, thus the beginnings of participative management.
Rolková and Farkašová (2015) credited Mary Parker Follett and Douglas McGregor with laying the foundation for participative leadership. Follett acknowledged the leader’s positional power within the organization’s hierarchy, but rejected the idea that leaders always give the orders and subordinates follow (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). Instead, Parker Follett asserted collaboration between managers and subordinates is most effective in solving problems and driving innovation (Mendenhall & Marsh, 2010).

McGregor’s Theory X and Theory Y describes two opposing management perspectives. Theory X describes a manager who assumes that people tend to avoid work and need to be closely supervised and controlled. Theory Y, by contrast, describes a manager who believes that workers desire to work and be productive but need managers to provide the tools and facilitate the cooperation to achieve productivity (Schein & Yaeger, 2011). Schein and Yaeger (2011) perhaps best described a Theory Y manager’s role when they described McGregor as someone who “opened doors and then left you alone” (p. 160).

According to Schein and Yaeger (2011), McGregor suggested Theory Y managers were more apt to engage in participative leadership and believed the best leadership style is one that combines Theory Y with participation (Schein & Yaeger, 2011). Though McGregor advocated the fostering of participative environments in which all employees equally contribute, the reality is that these ideas have not gained traction in the behaviors of many modern managers (Gannon & Boguszak, 2013). Schein and Yaeger (2011) noted that McGregor’s research implied that improvements in management necessitates replacing Theory X managers with Theory Y managers rather than converting Theory X managers to Theory Y. Schein and Yaeger (2011) explained McGregor believed that managers have assumptions that manifest themselves in their behaviors. In other words, the leader’s preconceived notions result in a worldview that either
favors or disfavors participative leadership. This worldview, according to Schein and Yaeger (2011), is difficult to change and is a hindrance to successful leadership. The authors assert managers’ interpersonal skills are critical and it is difficult for a Theory X person to be a successful manager or find contentment in a management position.

**Autocratic and democratic leadership.** Meyer and Meijers (2018) noted that Lewin, Lippitt, and White (1939) were the first to introduce and distinguish autocratic and democratic leadership styles in the literature. Lewin et al. (1939) compared the influence of autocratic, democratic, and laissez faire leadership styles on aggressive behavior in social climates. Since that time, “autocratic” has been synonymous with “authoritarian” and “democratic” with “participative” (Meyer & Meijers, 2018).

Fleishman (1953) identified consideration and initiating structure as two dimensions of leadership. Consideration described the degree to which the leader considered the feelings of his subordinates, while initiating structure described the manager’s effectiveness at leading group interactions to achieve shared goals. Fleishman suggested that leadership consisted of two dimensions: (1) the relationship orientation (consideration) and the (2) task-orientation (initiating structure). This suggests that performance gains may be a result of the care and consideration managers give to their subordinates.

**The contingency approach.** The contingency theory was a major shift in research, as it explains that there is no one management style that is appropriate for all situations (Kessler, 2013). Fiedler (1967) argued that task and relationship orientation alone did not fully account for leadership effectiveness and asserted that the appropriate leadership style depended on the situation. In the contingency theory, followers are a situational factor that leaders must consider in selecting their leadership approach (Fiedler, 1967; Hersey & Blanchard, 1969).
Fiedler (1967) explained that the most effective leadership model is the one that best aligns the style of the leader with the environment in which the leader operates. The contingency theory suggests that leaders must be aware of their leadership style and understand how it influences the performance of their followers (Kessler, 2013). Hersey and Blanchard (1969) proposed that effective leadership depends on the maturity level of the follower. To lead effectively, a leader must not only understand his own leadership style, but must also be able to recognize the readiness level of his followers and adjust accordingly.

The participative decision-making model. Participating decision making (PDM) is the concept of sharing authority and responsibility in business decisions (Russ & Rausch, 2011). Somech (2006) explains that participative leadership may help in motivating and empowering the team by giving genuine consideration to their decisional inputs. Russ and Rausch (2011) notes that PDM is not a new concept, but a concept that has been studied for more than fifty years.

Vroom and Yetton (1973) analyzed the contingency factors associated with decision-making and suggested a model to determine which leadership style should be used in various situations. The authors noted that leaders should focus on four criteria when determining the appropriate leadership decisional style: (1) decision quality level, (2) subordinate acceptance or commitment to decisions, (3) the time frame of the decision, and (4) the opportunity for subordinate development. The authors explained that there are seven rules that leaders can use to determine the processes that compromise decision quality or acceptance and eliminate those choices. These rules address the importance of the decision, the importance of commitment to the decision, the structure of the problem, the leader’s existing knowledge, level of conflict, and level of decisional support. The Vroom-Yetton decision model, shown in Figure 2, contains the
seven questions and the recommended styles that are indicated by the results of the given answers.

*Figure 2:* Vroom and Yetton Model (1973)

![Figure 2: Vroom and Yetton Model (1973)](image)

Vroom and Yetton (1973) explained that the leadership style should vary based on the answers to the questions in Figure 2. The model represents five different leadership styles along a continuum ranging from autocratic to participative. For example, the authors suggest the A1 leadership style, which represents a leader that uses the available information to make an independent decision, is recommended when the decision is not important, but team commitment is. The decision tree indicates that this style is only appropriate when the team will support the leader’s independent decision. If the team would not support the decision, then the G2 decision style would be appropriate. The G2 style, according to the authors, is a participative style in which the team works together to generate solutions and the leader is willing to accept and implement the decision of the group. Vroom and Yetton’s model suggests that participative
leadership aligns with the contingency and situational leadership theories, as it indicates the leader must vary his task and relationship orientation depending on the situation and must also account for the readiness of his followers.

Benefits of Participative Leadership

Participative leadership has been the subject of many organizational reform efforts, both in the United States and internationally (Park et al., 2015). Recent research suggests a positive relationship between participative leadership and organizational performance (Miao, Newman, & Huang, 2014; Newman et al., 2016). The benefits that participative management bring to the organization include employee engagement, increased decision acceptance, increased knowledge sharing, risk reduction, and greater levels of employee motivation. This section provides an overview of the research into each of these beneficial areas and the implications that each may have in the field of project management. The following section describes the organizational and personal benefits of participative leadership.

Employee engagement. Businesses today desire engaged employees to further the organization’s objectives (Sarti & Claxton, 2014). A participative leadership process creates opportunities for employees to grow and share in the decisions that impact their work environment. These opportunities and experiences create feelings of pride and belongingness that contribute to employee engagement (Li & Qian, 2016) Employee engagement can be defined as the connectedness an employee feels with the organization to which he belongs (C. Huang, You, & Tsai, 2012). Employee engagement can also be defined as a positive mindset (Schaufeli, Leiter, & Maslach, 2009) and is associated with the employee’s energy level, organizational involvement, and self-efficacy (Maslach, Leiter, & Jackson, 2012). The literature
indicates leadership practices that encourage and develop employee engagement are important factors in organizational success (Alfes, Shantz, Truss, & Soane, 2013).

The value project managers ascribe to employee participation is a critical factor in the degree of employee engagement. Alfes et al. (2013) posited that employee engagement is the result of the work effort and the social connections that develop between leaders and coworkers. Research shows that leaders who establish trust and build positive relationships create a work environment that increases employee engagement. Participative leadership increases communication, social connections, belongingness, and pride (Yoerger, Crowe, & Allen, 2015), all factors that lead to employee engagement.

Employees who have the knowledge and skills to contribute significantly to the project are an influencing factor in engagement level (Yoerger et al., 2015). The implication for project management is project managers should first assess the readiness of followers before deciding to implement a participative leadership approach. This is consistent with the situational leadership theory of Hersey and Blanchard (1969), which explains that follower readiness is an important consideration in leadership style effectiveness.

Participative leadership has contributed to higher performance, organizational citizenship behavior, and other positive work behaviors (Miao et al., 2014). Yoerger et al. (2015) found that participation in decision-making and employee engagement is positively related. Yoerger et al. (2015) examined the role that participative leadership plays in the effectiveness of organizational meetings, controlling for job level, meeting size, tenure, and age. The authors found that employees must perceive the work environment as safe and secure before they will be willing to voice their concerns and ideas. If the leadership style does not create this comfort
level and instead leads to anxiety and excessive worrying, then participative decision-making will not occur.

In their study on project management leadership styles in the healthcare, finance, and pharmaceutical fields, Cunningham, Salomone, and Wielgus (2015) found that leadership styles impact project success regardless of the industry. According to the authors, the three industries were most supportive of strategic and participative leadership. The authors suggest that innovative thinking, communication skills, and clear direction all are benefits of participative leadership styles and note that the most important role of a leader is keeping their teams challenged and engaged. A smaller, yet still significant finding in their study is that females preferred participative leadership slightly more than men, who favored a strategic style.

Organizational commitment also plays a key role in employee engagement. Commitment is the belief that a task is important enough to exert a significant effort to accomplish. Liu and Yuliani (2016) posit that team members who are not committed to a project are more reserved in their interactions and do not develop high levels of trust, negatively impacting project success. The authors suggest that more frequent interaction among stakeholders leads to a shared project vision, which improves collaborative attitudes and knowledge sharing. This suggests cross-functional project teams are at a disadvantage, since they are pulled from their functional areas to serve on the project team. Employees develop loyalties to their functional departments and can have differing communication norms, which challenge the identity, trust, and cohesion of the project team (Clercq, Thongpapanl, & Dimov, 2013). Anthony, Green, and McComb (2014) suggest that managers can develop a leadership style that encourages team interaction and minimizes relationship conflict to improve outcomes.
Organizational change. Project management is increasingly becoming an important factor in organizational change (Hornstein, 2015; Parker, Charlton, Ribeiro, & D. Pathak, 2013). Dearstyne (2012) notes that traditional organizational structures are rigid and restrictive and are more conducive to steadiness than change. Effectively managed projects, however, are focused on a specific change, opportunity, or problem, and reduce the rigidity of the traditional structure (Dearstyne, 2012). Successful change initiatives may create a significant competitive advantage. Similarly, project success is not only meeting time, cost, and scope, but is also dependent on furthering the competitive position of the firm (Gomes & Romão, 2016). Participative leadership style brings about change in the organization through joint influence and shared decision making (Pearce & Sims, 2002).

Hornstein (2015) explained the importance of integrating project management methodologies with organizational change and posits that the two are inseparable. The author explained that projects should be viewed as organizational change efforts. Project management and change management have different methods and different terminologies, but both are complimentary and mutually supportive (Hornstein, 2015).

Shenhar and Dvir (2007) explain that every project is an organizational change initiative. The authors suggest real organizational change, innovation, and competitive advantage must be gained through projects. Additionally, the authors note that project management has become increasingly important in recent years with shortened product life cycles that necessitate speed to market to gain competitive advantage.

Parker et al. (2013) assert organizational change and project management are not two mutually exclusive fields, but instead are two fields that must work together to achieve organizational goals. The authors explain that in organizational change, leadership is a crucial
factor. Leaders must create the desire for change and then implement the process by which the change will take place (Parker et al., 2013). Project methodology is advantageous in the change implementation phase and in carrying it out in a sequential method, carefully monitoring each step to ensure the change aligns with the organizational strategy (Parker et al., 2013). The research demonstrates that businesses are becoming more competitive globally and are facing increasing time-to-market pressures (Rahim, 2014), which necessitates a leader focus on merging organizational change with project management methodologies.

Gomes and Romão (2016) note that projects are indispensable to value creation and competitive advantage. The authors note that the pace of technology advancement is rendering bureaucratic organizational structures ineffective and outdated and is causing a shift in the approach toward project management. Although their study focused on the measurement of project success, the authors provided valuable input into the necessity of creating an environment in which all parties are focused on strategic objectives and meeting the needs of stakeholders. As the focus shifts more toward project-based strategy execution, appropriate leadership styles will continue to be a driving factor in the success of the project and strategic goal achievement. Managers are responsible for examining the advantages and disadvantages of each leadership style and determining the style that is most appropriate to implement for both project management and change management (Linski, 2014).

The appropriate leadership style aids in reaching organizational goals by influencing innovative work behavior. Fatima et al. (2017) described innovative work behavior as employee behavior that leads to new products, services, or procedures in a department or organization. The authors explain that employee commitment and innovative work behaviors increase in a
participative leadership environment. Innovation, role clarity, and customer service are all positively correlated with employee commitment to change (Lumbasi, K'Aol, & Ouma, 2016).

Fatima et al. (2017) suggest that team members who are actively involved in decision making feel a sense of privilege and pride when their manager views them as an integral part of the organization. According to the authors, the use of a participative leadership style increases the employees’ commitment to change, and commitment leads to the increase in innovative work behaviors. The authors suggest that participative leadership may have the same effect in project management of creating innovative ideas that can change practices or processes to reduce the amount of time required for the project or maximize the use of the organization’s resources.

In a study of the importance of leadership in innovation management, Wojciech (2017) suggests that autocratic leaders and participative leaders approach innovation projects from different perspectives. The author posited that autocratic leadership provides structure that guides innovation by creating a framework for decision making and aligning actions toward the supervisor’s vision. In contrast, participative leaders get involved with their team early and stay involved throughout the project while allowing team members the autonomy to develop solutions and alternatives. The authors note that the advantages of participative leadership are perhaps most beneficial during the early stages of the project, when stimulating creativity and new ideas are most important. However, in later project stages, structure becomes important to minimize team conflict, which suggests that effective project leadership must evolve with the project life cycle.

Performance. Newman et al. (2016) found that participative leadership and job performance are positively related in an internship setting. The authors found that a participative leadership style promotes the growth of trust, which leads to increased performance.
Their study illustrates the importance of affective trust and cognitive trust in increasing employee performance. The authors explain that affective trust develops between two parties through the building of emotional ties through social exchange. Affective trust develops through the feelings of well-being from the social interaction with another (Colquitt, Lepine, Piccolo, Zapata, & Rich, 2012; Zhu, Newman, Miao, & Hooke, 2013).

The development of cognitive trust, by contrast, is dependent on the follower’s perception of the leader’s reliability, integrity, and competence (Wang, Tomlinson, & Noe, 2010; J. Yang, Mossholder, & Peng, 2009). Newman et al. (2016) demonstrates that participative leadership increases job performance through strengthening affective trust. The findings are important in demonstrating the role that trust plays in the participative leadership style. Newman et al. (2016) suggest that instead of trust being a prerequisite to participative leadership, participative leadership itself may strengthen trust, leading to higher levels of subordinate performance. Newman et al. (2016) found that participative leadership may be as important in temporary environments as it is in permanent environments.

In a similar study, Miao et al. (2014) found that participative leadership and job performance are positively related. The authors noted that participative leadership builds affective trust that contributes to the achievement of the desired outcome. The authors also found that cognitive trust is an insignificant mediator in the relationship between leadership style and outcome success. The authors explain that affective trust is a deeper form of trust that takes more time to develop. The findings suggest that for improving performance, it is more important for the project team to feel that the project manager is supportive and caring than it is for them to perceive the project manager as competent and dependable.
In their study conducted on the government in South Korea, Park et al. (2015) found that participative management is not only positively associated with employees’ perceived organizational performance, but that the relationship is also moderated by how employees perceive the organization’s culture. They examined leadership style within South Korean government, which has historically favored authoritarian style leadership. The authors explain that more recently, the government has been incentivized to move to a more democratic leadership approach. The authors note that in the last thirty years, the Koreans have adopted some participative approaches to management in an effort to improve performance. The South Koreans saw the advances the Western world was making with the participative approach, and they adopted New Public Management (NPM) in hopes of achieving similar benefits (Park et al., 2015). The author’s findings suggest employee involvement and teamwork lead to improved organizational performance.

Torp and Nielsen (2018) conducted a study to investigate the relationship between participative leadership and financial outcomes when mediated by psychological ownership. For their study, the authors define psychological ownership as occurring when an employee feels that the goals and the outcomes of the organization belong to him. According to the authors, psychological ownership can be created through the employee stock ownership and participative leadership. The authors found, however, that stock ownership creates psychological ownership by placing the emphasis on external rewards while a participative leadership style focuses on building consensus and employee empowerment. According to the authors, a crowding-out effect takes place, in which the financial benefits of stock ownership negate the intrinsic rewards offered by participative leadership.
Lee, Willis, and Tian (2018) found that organizational performance and participative leadership are positively related. According to the authors, participative leadership has a significant positive effect on organizational citizenship behaviors and creativity. This supports the position that participative leadership is the most effective method to help employees gain competency and develop positive work behaviors. Despite the benefits of participative leadership, the authors caution against the extreme, which is self-managing teams with no leader. They suggest that this scenario does not foster employee empowerment, but instead creates a feeling of abandonment. The authors also note that participative leadership has a positive effect on performance when the team is faced with a challenging task. According to the authors, participative leadership has less value in routine tasks, where the autonomy granted by participative leadership is of little benefit.

**Decision acceptance.** Meyer and Meijers (2018) explain that there are two factors in determining the degree that followers will accept decisions and take the necessary actions for implementation. According to the authors, the first factor, direction, indicates employees are more likely to develop a commitment to the decision if they are convinced it will move them forward. Meyer and Meijers (2018) state that decisions offering direction are clear, consistent, and prompt. The clarity of the decision relates to how well the decision explains what will be done and what will not be done (Meyer & Meijers, 2018). Consistency indicates that there can be no missing or contradictory portions of the decisions. Finally, for a decision to be prompt, it must be delivered efficiently. The authors further indicate that leader commitment to the decision is positively related to subordinate commitment. Direction alone, though, is not sufficient to ensure that followers develop commitment to a decision. The authors explain
leaders should make clear, consistent, and timely decisions, stand behind them, and expect followers to also commit to them.

Meyer and Meijers (2018) also describe participation as a second factor of decision acceptance. They explain that subordinates expect to not only believe in the direction of the decision, but they also want to be included in the discussions and the decisions that impact them. This creates what Meyer and Meijers (2018) refer to as “the paradox of direction and participation” (p. 102), which means that the actions that lead to direction (clarity, consistency, and timeliness) do not align with the actions required for participation. Participation requires additional time, and although each employee has input into the decision, it is more difficult to make clear decisions and strategies that all parties are willing to support (Meyer & Meijers, 2018).

Pigeon, Montani, and Boudrias (2017) examined how empowering leadership and job autonomy influence the behaviors of the subordinates. The authors found a strong positive relationship between job autonomy and participation in decision making. They studied two categories of behaviors, discretionary behaviors and participation in decision making, with a mediating variable of psychological empowerment. They described psychological empowerment as the meaningfulness, competence, determination, and influence employees feel they have in their workplace. Discretionary behaviors, the authors explained, are those behaviors that are related to employee improvement that are likely to develop regardless of empowerment opportunities.

The second category, participation in decision making, describes the amount of involvement an individual has in decision-making (Pigeon et al., 2017). Pigeon et al. (2017) established that psychological empowerment is positively related to both discretionary behaviors
and participative decision-making behaviors. Their findings suggest that participative leaders create feelings of psychological empowerment within their subordinates, and these positive feelings result in behaviors that lead the subordinates to strive for personal development and to participate in future decisions.

**Knowledge sharing and risk reduction.** Knowledge sharing is the exchange of knowledge that occurs throughout the organization (Paulin & Suneson, 2012). Organizations that excel in knowledge management create new opportunities for businesses through improved risk management (AlShamsi & Ajmal, 2018). An organizational focus on the accumulation and sharing of knowledge helps develop the ability to adjust strategies and respond appropriately to changing work conditions (AlShamsi & Ajmal, 2018).

AlShamsi and Ajmal (2018) found that organizational leadership style is the factor that most influences knowledge sharing. The authors focused their study on technology institutes in the United Arab Emirates, finding that organizational culture, strategy, performance, organizational structure, and employee engagement all positively influence knowledge sharing in addition to the main factor of leadership. This suggests that participative leadership, which has been demonstrated to improve most of these factors, plays a key role in knowledge sharing (Alfes et al., 2013; C. Huang et al., 2012; Li & Qian, 2016; Maslach et al., 2012).

Shenhar and Dvir (2007) suggest that the constant change required in project plans necessitates developed knowledge sharing capabilities. The authors explain that initial project plans must evolve during the life of the project. The beginning of a project, for example, is characterized by uncertainty and risk. However, the accomplishment of more tasks reduces the uncertainty experienced at this initial stage. Shenhar and Dvir (2007) suggest that managers and project managers must adapt their style to the changing environment.
**Stakeholder participation.** Fassin, Deprez, Van den Abeele, and Heene (2016) found that participation is important at the operational level of an organization. The authors confirm that stakeholder participation in decision making, especially within service organizations, is important to organizational success. These findings suggest implications for project management, positing that stakeholder management is more effective in determining the strategy of the organization, whereas participative management is more important from an operational standpoint.

In a study on how organizational culture influences performance, Yaziki (2009) found that a clan culture is positively related to project and business performance. According to the author, a clan culture indicates an organization that values cohesion, commitment, high morale, and a family-like atmosphere in the work environment. The authors indicate that employee empowerment, participation, team involvement, increased horizontal communication, and a caring environment positively influence project success and organizational performance. Furthermore, the authors note that organizations that focus on stakeholder participation are more likely to build commitment and experience project success. According to the author, effective managers focus on creating opportunities to improve internal and external relationships, improving customer service, and inspiring individuals to achieve and exceed project goals. Yaziki (2009) suggests cultures that support participation are superior to hierarchal cultures in terms of project and organizational success.

**Motivation.** Fiaz, Su, Ikram, and Saqib (2017) examined the influence of leadership style on employee motivation among government employees in Pakistan. The authors focused their leadership style study on the Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA), a government-owned utility responsible for providing power in Pakistan. According to the
authors, the autocratic leadership style was observed most frequently but contributed the least to employee motivation. The authors also determined that both the laissez faire and democratic leadership styles contributed positively to employee morale and created positive work behaviors that led to improvements in productivity. The authors found that autocratic leadership style was negatively associated with employee motivation, while democratic leadership style was associated with higher levels of employee motivation. Based on their study, Fiaz et al. explained that although leadership style is dependent on the contingency factor, participative leadership has most concerned with people and the task.

**Appropriateness of Participative Leadership**

Despite the benefits of participative leadership discussed in the previous section, the contingency theory explains that the appropriate leadership style is dependent on the situation (Kessler, 2013). The contingency theory suggests that the type of project, the personality of the leader, and the maturity level of the followers are all situational factors that must be considered when choosing an appropriate leadership style (Blanchard & Hersey, 1996; Fiedler, 1967). In the following section, the researcher examines the historical and current research into the situational factors that influence the choice of leadership style.

**Organizational tenure diversity.** de Poel, Stoker, and Van der Zee (2014) found that tenure diversity should be considered as a determining factor of leadership style. The authors state that organizational tenure diversity explains that leadership style effectiveness in project teams is dependent on the differences in the length of time that individual team members have worked for the organization. The authors explain high organizational tenure diversity as a significant difference in the length of time team members have been employed by the organization. Similarly, low organizational tenure is indicative of the opposite. According to the
authors, participative leadership positively influences innovation, team performance, and team conflict in teams with low organizational tenure diversity, but has no impact on high organizational diversity teams. The author’s work supports follower readiness, as highly diverse organizational tenure teams may not yet have skills sets required for effective participative leadership.

**Personality of project manager.** An individual’s leadership style will fall on a continuum with directive at one extreme and participative at the other (Bass, 2008). Some argue that a leader’s personality is the most important factor in determining his leadership approach (Fiedler, 1967), while others claim that the situation is the most salient factor (Hersey & Blanchard, 1977). However, both the situation and the leader’s personality influence where his leadership style falls on the participative-directive continuum. Bass (2008) posits that the leader’s personality will influence the level of directive leadership, while the situation has more of an influence on the level of participative leadership. For example, when a decision is time-sensitive, there is insufficient time to confer with stakeholders, creating a situation that necessitates a more directive approach. Bass (2008) explains that frequency of directiveness is a function of the leader’s personality, while frequency of participation is based on the demands of the situation.

The personality of the leader is influenced by several cultural dimensions. Hofstede (1980) described five cultural characteristics that influence participation: (1) power distance, (2) individualism, (3) masculinity, (4) uncertainty avoidance, and (5) time-orientation. Although Hofstede’s dimensions focused on cultural differences between nations, Sharma and Kirkman (2015) noted that leaders in today’s organizations come from a variety of cultures and
subcultures and therefore applied the factors at the individual level. They focused their study on three dimensions: power distance, individualism, and uncertainty avoidance.

Power distance, explained by Hofstede (1980), is the leader’s willingness to accept unequal distributions of power in an organization. When a leader has a low power distance orientation, they are more likely to employ a participative style through sharing their leadership authority with members of their team (Sharma & Kirkman, 2015). Sharma and Kirkman (2015) note that leaders with low power distance tend to view subordinates as equals, share power, and allow followers more decision-making influence.

Mainga (2017) suggests reducing power distance could be beneficial to project-based organizations. An organization that can create a culture free from blame encourages subordinates to acknowledge their mistakes without fear of consequences. The author suggests that participative leadership helps build a productive culture that reduces power distance, enhances team building, and develops a learning climate that allows employees to share knowledge and take risks that have the potential to benefit the firm.

Individualism explains the leader’s propensity to place more value on the collective or the individual (Hofstede, 1980). Leaders who are highly collective will view the welfare of others ahead of their own and tend to approach decisions based on what is best for all involved rather than what is best for the individual leader (Hofstede, 1980). Leaders with a collectivist persuasion exhibit supportive behaviors and concern for their employees and favor collaboration, sharing, and group harmony (Sharma & Kirkman, 2015).

Uncertainty avoidance is a measure of the leader’s tolerance of uncertainty and ambiguous situations (Hofstede, 1980). Leaders who rank highly on the uncertainty avoidance dimension view ambiguity as stressful and seek to remove the stress by instituting strict rules and
refusing to accept ideas that deviate from known practices (Hofstede, 1980). Leaders with a high
uncertainty tolerance are found closer to the directive end of the participative-directive
continuum and prefer proven solutions over innovative ideas and unorthodox behaviors
(Hofstede, 1980; Rossberger & Krause, 2014; Sharma & Kirkman, 2015). Sharma and Kirkman
(2015) argued that high uncertainty avoidance leaders view the empowering of subordinates as a
risky endeavor and are therefore less likely to involve them in decisions. This suggests leaders
with a low tolerance for ambiguity would be less likely to involve the project team in decisions
concerning risk management.

**Follower readiness.** The level of follower maturity, or readiness, is a factor in
determining the level of success leaders will experience when implementing a participative
approach (Lam, Huang, & Chan, 2015). Tannenbaum and Schmidt (1973) theorized that
leadership styles can be placed on a continuum from boss-centered to subordinate-centered. At
one end, boss-centered behavior describes a style in which the boss makes the decisions and
expects followers to carry out the task without questioning his authority (Kessler, 2015).
Subordinate-centered behaviors are those leadership behaviors exhibited when a superior allows
subordinates to determine direction and participate in decisions relevant to the organizational
goals (Kessler, 2015). Tannenbaum and Schmidt (1973) argued that the best leadership style, or
the best place to be on this continuum, depended not only on the leader’s personality, but also on
the amount of confidence the leader has in his subordinates (Tannenbaum & Schmidt, 1973).

Follower maturity is not a new concept, but is a component of the situational leadership
theory. The situational leadership theory indicates that effective leadership depends on the
leader, the situation, and on the maturity of the followers (Moore, 1976). Moore (1976)
developed the Follower Maturity Index, (FMI) to measure what he believed were the relevant
variables of follower maturity: achievement, responsibility, experience, activity, dependence, variety, interest, perspective, position, and awareness. According to the author, follower readiness is required for effective leadership. Moore suggested a tool to assess follower readiness would help a leader assess the status of his followers and adapt his behaviors to match the follower’s maturity level.

Salehzadeh (2017) studied follower readiness in the educational setting of the University of Isfahan in Iran. The purpose of the research was to determine the followers’ preferred leadership style and compare that to their level of academic degree. The level of degree is an indication of follower readiness, as students who have earned higher academic credentials would be expected to have more knowledge and competence. The authors found that undergraduates preferred a directing style of leadership while most postgraduates preferred a coaching style. According to the authors, the PhD students preferred a supporting style. The findings of this study are in line with the situational leadership theory. As the students increased in their level of degree, they developed a low task orientation and a high relationship need. The authors concluded that leaders do play a key role within organizations, but followers also have an influence on the way they are led. The findings suggest leaders should strive to understand the development level of their subordinates and create leadership styles and practices that accommodate follower needs.

Neider and Schriesheim (2014) explain that leaders gain confidence in their subordinates when subordinates are perceived as mature and competent. Neider and Schriesheim (2014) explain the resulting confidence influences the actions of the leader and increases the likelihood that the leader will take on additional challenges. Leaders will step out of their comfort zone, according to Neider and Schriesheim (2014), to influence their subordinates and challenge them
with stretch goals to further increase their self-efficacy and maturity. This suggests that participative leadership has a multiplying effect. Once the leader feels confident in the abilities of his followers, he develops a more participative approach, which in turn further increases the maturity of the followers.

There is evidence that leadership style can improve performance through reciprocal empowerment. Van Dierendonck and Dijkstra (2012) posit that leaders are more likely to delegate to subordinates who have demonstrated initiative and self-regulation. However, the authors note that followers can also influence their leader’s behavior by taking initiative and making steps toward improvement. The authors suggest that follower readiness may not be a prerequisite for participative leadership, but instead the appearance of readiness may be sufficient to persuade managers to implement participative practices, which in turn will add new challenges and opportunities for follower development.

**Project Success**

A universally agreed upon definition for project success has proven to be elusive to academic researchers since the 1970s (Ika, 2009). In the absence of a universal definition, researchers have turned to project success factors as indicators of project success (Müller & Jugdev, 2012). Project success is a multifaceted concept that consists of the objective measures of time, cost, and scope, as well as more subjective measures including stakeholder satisfaction and strategic alignment. Besteiro, Pinto, and Novaski (2015) note that project success is not a simple concept to define, as success is dependent upon the perceptions of the stakeholder and organizational perspective. The absence of a tool to measure the various factors associated with project success led Shenhar and Dvir (2007) to develop the Project Success Assessment Questionnaire (PSAQ). The PSAQ identifies five major dimensions for project success: (1)
project efficiency, (2) impact on the customer, (3) impact on the team (4) business and direct success, and (5) preparing for the future.

**Project efficiency.** Shenhar et al. (2001) categorized two of the traditional project success metrics, time and cost, as project efficiency dimensions. The authors noted that with shorter product life cycles and increasing time to market pressures, time and cost are important measures when assessing project success. Zidane and Olsson (2017) noted that research is moving from solely measuring efficiency to measuring effectiveness and efficiency. Although completion of the project within the budget and schedule is desirable, the project must also meet its intended results and requirements to be deemed successful (Zidane & Olsson, 2017).

Project efficiency is the dimension that is most important during the execution phase of the project (Shenhar et al., 2007). The ease of measuring project efficiency makes it highly useful during the execution phase (Shenhar et al., 2007). During the execution phase, projects are evaluated based on how they are performing relative to the budget and schedule; these measures allow the project manager to control the direction of the project (Shenhar et al., 2007). However, once the project is completed, the importance of efficiency begins to become less of a factor, and Shenhar et al. (2007) note that, in most cases, this dimension is completely irrelevant one year after the project’s completion.

**Impact on the customer.** A successful project must also meet customer requirements in terms of performance, function, and technical specifications (Shenhar et al., 2001). Shenhar et al. (2007) explain that the impact on the customer includes fulfilling customer needs, solving a customer’s problem, satisfying the customer, the extent to which the customer uses the product, and the customer’s willingness to come back to the company for future projects. Impact on the
customer, Shenhar et al. (2007) asserted, is the most important dimension in assessing project success.

**Impact on the team.** The impact on the team is an important consideration in project success measures. Gaining experience and increasing their competencies through challenging assignments, team members prepare themselves to explore new areas and develop innovations that will influence the success of the organization in the future (Shenhar et al., 2007). Team members that collaborate well together develop relationships from the time spent together that helps them overcome obstacles in subsequent projects (Shenhar & Dvir, 2011). Shenhar and Dvir (2007) explained the fifth dimension was added to the original four-item PSAQ after a study that indicated employee knowledge, skills, commitment, and development were all relevant factors of organizational success.

**Business and direct Success.** A successful project must also further the competitive position of the organization (Shenhar et al., 2001). Business and direct success is the third dimension noted by Shenhar et al. (2001). Measurement of this dimension includes the firm’s financial performance, gains in market share, and new processes developed as a result of the project (Shenhar et al., 2001). It takes a longer period of time to measure business and direct success than efficiency because it is normal for a few years to pass before the new product or service begins to gain market share or increase the financial position of the firm (Shenhar et al., 2007).

**Preparing for the future.** A successful project should also prepare the organization for future opportunities. Shenhar et al. (2007) explains that this metric measures the extent to which the project prepares the organizational and technological infrastructure for future competition. This includes skill development, innovations, and new markets that are realized as a result of the
project (Shenhar et al., 2001). Shenhar et al. (2001) noted that this dimension is not as easily assessed as the other three, as it is difficult to know the influence the project has on the future until approximately two to five years after the completion of the project. Often projects that seem unsuccessful at the time of their completion may be viewed differently after a longer time has passed, and vice versa (Williams, 2016).

Research Tools

Two research instruments have been used to measure the variables within this survey. The Empowering Leadership Questionnaire, developed by Arnold et al. (2000), is a valid and reliable tool to measure a leader’s propensity to lead from a participative style. The Project Success Assessment Questionnaire, created by Shenhar and Dvir (2007), is used to measure five factors of project success. The following section contains a discussion of the initial development and the subsequent uses of the research instruments.

The Empowering Leadership Questionnaire (ELQ). The Empowering Leadership Questionnaire (ELQ) was designed by Arnold et al. (2000) to measure empowering leadership. The authors explained the necessity of a new scale because they felt the existing tools measured leadership from an organizational perspective and were limited in their ability to measure team empowerment. The development of the ELQ began with three studies. These studies enabled the researchers to determine and measure leadership behaviors that contribute to perceived empowerment.

In the first study, the authors conducted in-depth interviews with 195 volunteers to determine the leadership behaviors that contribute to the follower’s perception of empowerment. The authors noted the volunteers were both team members and managers in the clothing, construction, and telecommunications industries. The authors purposely chose businesses that
differed in size, product type, team use, and team function to minimize the influence of these variables in their study. From these interviews, the authors identified eight dimensions that affected the perception of employee empowerment: coaching, leading by example, encouraging, participative decision making, informing, showing concern, interacting with team, and group management.

After the first study, Arnold et al. (2000) discovered that they needed a way to measure these eight categories. To achieve this, they interviewed 205 employees. During this second study, the authors narrowed their original eight dimensions to five, finding that empowering leaders that coach, inform, show concern, and encourage participative decision-making were most strongly related to empowering leadership behaviors. In the second study, the authors were able to determine five categories of leadership behaviors important for team empowerment.

Arnold et al. (2000) conducted the third study to validate the instrument and compare it to other tools that assessed empowering behaviors. The authors compared the ELQ to the Managerial Practices Survey (MPS) developed by Yukl (1989) and the Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire Form XII (LBDQ XII) created by Stogdill (1963). In the third study, Arnold et al. (2000) administered the ELQ, the MPS, and the LBDQ to teams at five different employment sites to determine the effectiveness of the ELQ in relation to the other two tools. The findings of the third study indicated strong support for the five-factor model.

Arnold et al. (2000) studied empowering leadership at the individual level, indicating that the style of the leader influences employees’ perceptions of empowerment. Empowering leaders are concerned with the need to empower employees, as employee empowerment is positively correlated with employees’ attitudes and behaviors (Avolio, Zhu, Koh, & Bhatia, 2004). Fong
and Snape (2015) suggested this is because empowered employees are more likely to find meaning in their jobs, develop self-efficacy, and self-manage.

Uses of the ELQ. Fong and Snape (2015) noted that although the ELQ was developed and validated at the individual level, it may also have implications for examining the influence participative leadership has on a group. The authors recognized that empowering leadership is increasingly being measured at the group level rather than the individual level. A manager’s leadership style may influence the individual depending on the personality characteristics of the individual; in the same way, leadership style may also influence the group of followers. According to the authors, measuring at both the individual level and the group level is important when determining the level of empowering leadership. In their study, they tested the effectiveness of the ELQ at the group level and found that the ELQ was valid for measuring empowering leadership at the group level. Additionally, the authors found empowering leadership is positively related to psychological empowerment at the individual and group level.

Grill, Pousette, Nielsen, Grytnes, and Törner (2017) used a modified version of the ELQ to measure empowering leadership in vocational education to show that empowering leaders influence the future leadership styles of their subordinates. The authors found that students who perceived their vocational leaders as empowering were more likely to also become empowering leaders themselves. Interestingly, the authors found that it was the leadership style of the supervisors, not the vocational teachers, which had the strongest influence on the students’ perception of empowerment.

Since its creation, the ELQ has been used in many studies to measure empowering leadership. For example, Ghaffari, Shah, Burgoyne, Nazri, and Aziz (2017) used the ELQ to ascertain the level of participative leadership style among managers in Universiti Teknologi
Malaysia, and found that participative leadership is positively related to respect for employees and job satisfaction. Hill and Bartol (2016) used the ELQ to measure empowering leadership in virtual teams and found that performance and collaboration among team members is positively influenced by empowering leadership. Lam et al. (2015) used the ELQ to demonstrate that there is a participative leadership threshold that leaders must cross before and increase in performance is achieved.

The researcher chose the ELQ for this study because it can be used to measure the dimensions that are relevant to this study and allows the researcher to ascertain the project manager’s leadership style as perceived by his team. Additionally, the researcher will measure the five factors of empowering leadership identified by Arnold et al. (2000) to examine the effect of each factor on project success.

The Project Success Assessment Questionnaire (PSAQ). The Project Success Assessment Questionnaire is a tool originally developed by Shenhar et al. (2001) to measure project success in the five dimensions of impact on the customer, impact on the team, business/direct organizational success, project efficiency, and preparation for the future. The authors suggest that strategic management is an important part of a project manager’s responsibilities. The project manager, for example, must align the project with the short and long-term goals of the organization and cannot rely solely on time, cost, or scope to measure project success. According to the authors, while project success is difficult to precisely define, a successful project does have measurable dimensions. These dimensions include the improvement of the business, influence on the team, satisfaction of the customer or end user, project efficiency, and preparation for the future. A project manager can determine if his project is successful through analyzing the five areas of success indicated in the PSAQ.
The PSAQ has been called the most reliable five-dimensional project success instrument (Ahmed & bin Mohamad, 2016) and has been used in many studies to measure the construct of project success. In their study on project success, Ahmed, Mohamad, and Ahmad (2014) used the PSAQ when they found that top management support and project success have a positive relationship. When examining the relationship of front-end stage managerial practices and project success, Nwagbogwu (2011) also used the PSAQ, finding that both rational decision making and goal clarity positively correlate with project success.

**Transition and Summary**

Though participative leadership has received a considerable amount of attention in the literature, there has been little attention devoted to the effects of participative leadership in temporary work environments. The literature review highlights the history of participative leadership, the benefits that it may bring in terms of project success, and the context in which the style is appropriate. The benefits of increased knowledge sharing, team cohesion, performance, motivation, and commitment suggest a possible connection exists between participative leadership and project success. The next section outlines the research project that examines the relationship between participative leadership and project success.
Section 2: The Project

The focus of this research project was to examine the influence of participative management on project success. The researcher contacted two groups to participate in this study: (1) The North Carolina Piedmont Triad chapter of the Project Management Institute (NCPTPMI), one of three Project Management Institute Chapters in North Carolina, and (2) the Carolinas Associated General Contractors (CAGC). The NCPTPMI is comprised of project managers from the Winston-Salem, High Point, and Greensboro areas of North Carolina. There are 732 chapter members as of September, 2018. The CAGC is a construction trade association for contractors and construction-related firms that operates in North and South Carolina.

The researcher chose a quantitative design as it was the most appropriate to determine the influence between the two variables of participative leadership style and project success. Using this design, the researcher facilitated a survey of project managers and project team members to determine their perception of the project manager’s leadership style and project success. The results contributed to the body of knowledge by increasing the understanding of the benefits of participative management in the environment of project management.

Section 2 presents the study design used for this research project, describes the study population and participants, and details the sampling and data collection process. Next, the researcher includes a discussion of the methods used to analyze the data collected from the study. Finally, the section concludes with a description of the reliability and validity of the study.

Purpose Statement

In this correlational quantitative study, a survey method will be employed to determine project managers’ and project team members’ perceptions of participative leadership behaviors demonstrated on their last completed project (independent variable) and their perception of project success (dependent variable). Creswell (2014) explains that quantitative research is the
best method to use in identifying factors that influence an outcome, and in understanding 
predictors of outcomes. Blackstone (2012) noted that the benefits of the survey method include 
the ability to efficiently generate a large amount of data at a relatively low cost and the ability to 
ascertain information about the population from a smaller sample. The survey method will 
provide a sufficient amount of data to analyze and examine the leadership styles of project 
managers to determine the role each has in project success. Creswell (2014) explained that 
quantitative studies are best when a researcher seeks to verify or refute a narrow hypothesis. 
Identifying the relationships of leadership styles to project success is best done with a 
quantitative study in which the researcher can examine the influence that the independent 
variable, leadership style, has on the dependent variable, project success.

Role of the Researcher

Quantitative researchers play a neutral role in a quantitative study (Yilmez, 2013). The 
researcher in this study sought to examine the influence of participative leadership on project 
success. This quantitative study focused on the outcome of the study and the relationships 
between the variables, which was accomplished through an online survey taken by project 
managers and project team members. The researcher informed the anonymous participants of 
their rights and time expectations required to complete the survey. Respondents were free to exit 
the survey at any time by closing the link and exiting the browser.

In comparison to a qualitative study that may require interviews or case studies, 
researcher involvement was minimal in the survey process. The researcher was responsible for 
contacting the survey copyright owners to request permission to use the two surveys, the PSAQ 
and ELQ, in this study. The researcher then entered these survey questions into SurveyMonkey 
to facilitate the survey on the Internet. After the researcher received permission and the survey
was available online, he then recruited survey participants through contacts at each organization. The participants were informed of their rights when they clicked on the link and disseminated the survey. At the conclusion of the survey, the researcher’s role was much more involved, as he collected the results and performed an analysis of those results. The recruitment steps are explained in more detail in the following section.

Participants

The participants for this study were project team members or project managers who primarily work within the United States and are above eighteen years of age. The researcher accessed the sample group by contacting two membership organizations, the NCPTPMI Chapter and the Carolinas AGC. The members of the NCPTPMI are project managers and project team members who work in the Greensboro, Winston-Salem, and High Point areas of North Carolina. The Carolinas AGC is an organization of contractors and construction-related organizations in North Carolina and South Carolina.

The researcher contacted the Vice President of the North Carolina Piedmont Triad Chapter of the Project Management Institute, a professional organization comprised of members who work within the project management industry. This contact provided information on the number of members (732) and the size of the chapter’s email contact list (2400). The email list is substantially larger because it contains the 732 members of the chapter, but also contains past members and those who have successfully completed PMP credential testing. The contact stated that the email list contained the people in the region who work within the field of project management in the areas of Greensboro, Winston-Salem, and High Point, North Carolina. According to the Piedmont Triad Regional Council (2013), this region of North Carolina is home to 1,640,717 residents as of the 2010 census. The survey opened on September 21 and ran
through October 31. The researcher also recruited some participants in person at the NCPTPMI annual conference on October 12, as the organization provided a booth at the conference where the researcher set up and shared the link to the survey.

The contact at the Carolinas AGC sent the survey link to the members of the organization through their weekly membership email. The survey link reached approximately 3,000 members. The survey link was sent on October 17 and ran for three consecutive weeks, closing on October 31.

Once the results were downloaded from SurveyMonkey, they were password protected on the researcher’s PC that was only accessible to the researcher. The names of participants were not collected, only their responses. Thus, the surveys were anonymous, eliminating the risk of a breach of confidentiality. Anonymity also ensured that there was no job or employment risk associated with participation in this study.

**Research Method and Design**

The researcher chose a correlational quantitative study to examine the relationship between a project manager’s leadership style and project success. The quantitative design is appropriate for this study because the researcher seeks to determine if a participative leadership style and project success are related and does not seek to establish a causal relationship. D. Morgan (2014) notes the chosen research method should fit the research questions and the purpose of the research project. The research was conducted with an anonymous online survey facilitated through SurveyMonkey. The data was collected and later analyzed using SPSS.

**Research Method**

The research design was a correlational quantitative study. Creswell (2014) explained that correlational studies are best when the researcher seeks to measure the strength of the
relationship between two variables, in this research, leadership style (autocratic or participative) and project success. The research question of relationship between the two variables could best be answered through this correlational study.

There are many distinctions between qualitative and quantitative designs. (D. Morgan, 2014) noted that qualitative designs are used when the researcher’s goal includes observing a phenomenon to develop a theory. Quantitative designs, however, begin with theory that is evaluated through observations (D. Morgan, 2014). There is ample existent theory concerning participative leadership, and this study was framed by the contingency theory, the situational leadership theory, and the participative model of decision-making. The researcher in this study did not aim to create new theory, but instead sought to test these existing theories through a predetermined survey design. This correlational study began with a review of these three theories and then tested these theories through the survey method to determine if actual results align with theorized results.

The researcher considered many different research designs before selecting the correlational study. For example, a quasi-experimental design could be used to place a participative leader in a group that had formerly been led by an autocratic leader. Quasi-experimental designs are similar to true experimental designs except the former does not include random groups and controlled environments (Tharenou et al., 2007). Through the use of a quasi-experimental design, though, the researcher could ascertain whether the change in leadership style influenced the success of the project. For this reason, the quasi-experimental design would be able to test the hypothesis and thus answer the research question, but there are many variables that would be difficult or impossible to control. In addition, the researcher did not wish to make
changes or manipulate the independent variable, but instead sought to gain a general understanding of the relationship between participative leadership and project success.

The descriptive style was also not an appropriate match for the research question. A researcher can collect large amounts of data and identify future research areas with a descriptive design (Tharenou et al., 2007), but the design cannot be used to establish a correlation between variables (Creswell, 2014). The limitations of the descriptive method made it a poor fit for this study.

Research Design

The researcher chose a survey design to examine the relationship between participative leadership style and project success. The independent variable of participative leadership style is defined as the degree to which a manager exhibits participative or autocratic leadership behaviors. Participative, or democratic leadership, and autocratic leadership are viewed as two opposing ends of a spectrum in which a leader’s style falls. In other words, the two leadership styles are not mutually exclusive, and an individual leader’s style will fall on the spectrum somewhere between these two extremes. Using the ELQ, the researcher was able to determine the degree to which the leaders exhibited a participative style during their projects. The researcher averaged the responses to the 38 questions pertaining to leadership. Each question required a response on a Likert scale with a range of one (strongly disagree) to five (strongly agree). After converting the Likert scores to an average scale, higher totals (average scores closer to five) on the ELQ indicate a leader with a more participative approach, while average scores closer to one are indicative of a leader that exhibits more autocratic leadership behaviors.
An additional benefit of the ELQ is that Arnold et al. (2000) included questions in the survey for each of the five factors of participative leadership. The separate scales allowed the researcher to not only assess overall participative leadership, but also which of the five factors had the most influence on project success. The five independent variables used to test hypothesis two were the five factors of participative leadership: (1) coaching, (2) leading by example, (3) informing, (4) participative decision-making, and (5) concern for the team. The researcher analyzed the data by averaging the response to the five questions on leading by example, the 11 questions pertaining to coaching, the six questions each on participative decision-making and informing, and the ten questions on showing concern.

The dependent variable, project success, was also measured through a survey design. Using the PSAQ, the researcher was able to analyze survey results to determine the respondents’ views of project success in terms of project efficiency, customer impact, team impact, and preparing for the future. The researcher chose to reduce some of the questions in the original PSAQ, as the metrics in “preparing for the future” and “business and organizational success” would be a long-term measure and thus not appropriate for this study which requires a completed project within the past two years. Shenhar et al. (2001) noted that determining business success and preparation for the future is time dependent, as each requires more time to pass before an accurate analysis can be made. However, the authors noted that the first three dimensions can be measured much sooner, as efficiency can be measured immediately after completion and customer and team impact can be measured a few months after completion (Shenhar et al., 2001). Higher PSAQ scores on a numerically converted Likert scale indicate a more successful project.
Population and Sampling

The population for this quantitative correlational study is comprised of project managers and team members who are 18 years or older, have worked in project-related businesses, and have completed a project within the last two years. Since this group meets the definition of an infinite population, the researcher used the standard error of the proportion to calculate the required sample size. Since the population standard deviation was unknown, an unbiased estimator of the population proportion, 0.5, was used to calculate the required sample size for the study. This assumes the standard deviation for the sample size is as large as possible. The formula used in this computation is as follows:

\[
n = \frac{Z_{\alpha/2}^2 \pi (1 - \pi)}{e^2}
\]

Since the population proportion, \( \pi \), was unknown, a value of 0.5 was used. The researcher desired a 95% confidence interval, \( Z_{\alpha/2} = 1.96 \), and the sampling error, \( e \), indicates the amount of error that is tolerable in estimating the population proportion. Berenson, Levine, and Szabat (2015) state that when the sampling proportion is unknown, a value of 0.5 can be used, as this value makes the quantity of \( \pi (1 - \pi) \) as large as possible. The computation of this equation indicates the required sample size for this study is 384.16, or 385 total samples. It is important, however, to remember that this number will overestimate the samples needed for a 95% confidence level because the standard deviation of the samples may be much smaller than the maximum.

There were 214 samples collected from the study. Using this information, the researcher calculated the standard deviation for each variable used in the study. The standard deviation for leadership style was 0.735 and the standard deviation for project success was 0.459, which corresponds to a required sample size of 55 for leadership style and 32 for project success. The
same method was used to calculate the required sample size for the other independent variables: (1) leading by example: 61, (2) coaching: 64, (3) participative decision-making: 55, (4) informing; 84, and (5) showing concern: 67. Considering all the variables in the study, the highest required sample size for a 95% confidence interval for all individual variables is 84. Therefore, the sample size of 214 is sufficient for a 95% confidence interval.

The sample size required for a 95% confidence level was 384. The researcher chose a convenience sample for this survey due to the privacy limitations of the participating organizations. The sample consisted of current and former members of the North Carolina Piedmont Triad Chapter of the Project Management Institute (NCPTPMI) and the Carolinas Association of General Contractors (NCAGC). The NCPTPMI is a not-for-profit organization that promotes the practice of project management within the Piedmont Triad of North Carolina (PMI NC Piedmont Triad Chapter, 2013). The Piedmont Triad is an area in central North Carolina that consists of the cities of Greensboro and Winston-Salem and surrounding areas, a region with a population of 1,640,717 (Piedmont Triad Regional Council, 2013). The Carolinas AGC is an organization of contractors and construction-related organizations in North Carolina and South Carolina. The contact at Carolinas AGC sent the survey link as part of the weekly newsletter to their membership list which reached approximately 3000 members.

The population for this study is comprised of project managers and team members that are at least 18 years of age, work in the United States, and have completed a project within the past two years. The sample was accessed through two membership organizations, the NCPTPMI and the Carolinas AGC. Although these organizations would not share their membership list with the researcher, they agreed to send the survey link to their members on his behalf.
The Carolinas AGC is an organization of contractors and construction-related organizations in North Carolina and South Carolina. The contact at Carolinas AGC sent the survey link as part of the weekly newsletter to their membership list. The link reached approximately 3000 members.

The researcher chose the population for the study because it consists of individuals above 18 years old who are employed in the United States and have project management experience and/or expertise. Through these two organizations, the researcher was able to contact approximately 5400 individual project managers and team members. This sample ensures, within reason, that survey participants work within project management industries and possess the project experience necessary to complete the survey.

The researcher chose a convenience sample for this survey method. The policies of both the NCPTPMI and the Carolinas AGC would not allow the release of the complete email list to a third party, which made the convenience sample the only avenue to collect data from this group. Although the researcher knew the approximate number of individuals within the sample, it was not possible to know which members chose to take the survey. The lack of access to the email list inhibited the use of random sampling. Fricker (2016) explained that in situations where individuals volunteer for surveys, a convenience sample can be used. Creswell (2014) describes this non-probability sampling method as less desirable than a probabilistic sample.

A pitfall of the convenience sample is that it introduces bias into the survey. The researcher cannot be certain that the sample frame can be generalized to the entire population. Fricker (2016) notes that although both probability and non-probability surveys can introduce non-participant bias, the potential is greater with convenience samples. According to Fricker (2016), potential participants who opt-in are often not representative of the general population.
the lack of information on those who opt out make it impossible to assess the significance of the bias.

Jager, Putnick, and Bornstein (2017), posited that homogeneous convenience samples are narrowly more generalizable than a random sample. When group characteristics are expected to be similar, a homogeneous sample provides a suitable alternative to random sampling (Jager et al., 2017). The population for this study is homogeneous in that the potential participants work within the same region of the United States and are all in the project management profession. According to Jager et al. (2017), the similar characteristics of the participants will be more conducive to generalization than a convenience sample taken from a larger geographic area.

**Data Collection**

The online survey, administered via SurveyMonkey, combined questions from the PSAQ and the ELQ. The PSAQ portion was used to measure the dependent variable, project success, while the ELQ was used to measure the following independent variables: participative leadership, coaching, leading by example, informing, participative decision-making, and leading by example. The contacts at the NCPTPMI and Carolinas AGC emailed the survey link to their contact lists. In addition to email, the researcher, with permission from the NCPTPMI, set up a booth at the NCPTPMI Annual Conference. The 58 attendees who agreed to participate in the survey received a link from the researcher via email or through scanning a QR code and completed the surveys while at the conference. The survey opened on September 21 and remained open until October 31. A description of the instruments used in this study are in the following section.
Instruments

In this study, the researcher used the Empowering Leadership Questionnaire (ELQ) to measure participative decision-making and the Project Success Assessment Questionnaire (PSAQ) to measure project success. The researcher combined the two surveys and seven demographic questions to create a 61-question survey. This survey was used to measure the leadership style of the project manager, the individual factors of participative leadership, and the perceived success of the project. The researcher used the resulting data to examine if a relationship exists between participative leadership style and which factors of participative leadership are correlated with project success.

The ELQ. Arnold et al. (2000) developed the ELQ as a tool to measure empowering leadership. According to the authors, empowering leadership is a concept comprised of five factors: coaching, leading by example, informing, showing concern for the team, and participative decision-making. The authors created a Likert scale to assess respondents’ perceptions of their leaders’ styles in each of the five factors. Overall, the ELQ consists of 38 survey questions, each of which asks the respondent to analyze how often their leaders exhibit specific behaviors on a scale of “always,” “often,” “sometimes,” “rarely.” or “never” (Arnold et al., 2000).

For this study on participative leadership, the participative decision-making variable was the appropriate factor for the determination of the leader’s style. This factor consists of six questions on the ELQ that pertain to the project manager’s leadership style. The survey is included in Appendix A. The respondents were asked to complete these survey questions based on their most recent completed project. To qualify for the survey, this project must have been
completed within the last two years to increase the likelihood that the respondents will recollect the leader’s style accurately.

Content-related validity examines how well the content of the instrument reflects the test domain (Delgado-Rico, Carretero-Dios, & Ruch, 2012). Arnold et al. (2000) performed three studies to examine the content validity of the ELQ. They first conducted in-depth interviews with 195 project managers and team members who volunteered for the study. Volunteers were from industries that differed in size, product type, team use, and function to minimize the influence of these variables in the study. The results of these interviews led the authors to reduce their study to eight dimensions that influenced the perceptions of employee empowerment. A second study with 205 employees reduced the original eight dimensions to five. The process the authors chose was sufficient to demonstrate content-related validity and is consistent with the process that others deem to be appropriate to show content validity (Delgado-Rico et al., 2012).

Construct validity is the extent to which the instrument measures the construct that it is intended to measure. To test the construct validity of the ELQ, Arnold et al. (2000) cross-validated the five-factor model by comparing the five ELQ measurements to similar leadership instruments, the Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ) and the Managerial Practices Survey (MPS). They found that all Pearson product-moment correlations were “strong, positive, and significant at the p=0.001 level” (Arnold et al., 2000, p. 262). The authors also used regression analysis to determine if the measurements were consistent with the other two instruments. The adjusted r-squared values, ranging from 0.51 to 0.69, indicated that the constructs measured in the ELQ are significantly related to the other constructs (Shenhar et al., 2001). The regression results for participative decision-making, the relevant portion of the ELQ for this study, showed an adjusted r-squared value of 0.62 and a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.853 for
the participative decision-making scale (Miao et al., 2014), suggesting the items have high internal consistency.

**The PSAQ.** The PSAQ, developed by Shenhar et al. (2001), measures project success in five dimensions: impact on customer, business and direct organizational success, project efficiency, and preparation for the future. Shenhar et al. (2001) noted the creation of this tool was necessary to account for the many facets of project success. For example, project success is a concept that cannot be completely encompassed by time, cost, and scope, though these three concepts are important. It is also important that the project contributes to the goals of the organization, the needs of the customer, and the strength of the project team (Shenhar et al., 2001). The PSAQ also was found to be sufficiently reliable by (Nwagbogwu, 2011), who noted that the Cronbach’s alpha coefficients ranged from 0.78 to 0.93. Cronbach’s alpha is well above the alpha score of 0.70 that Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) indicated should be considered as acceptable reliability scores.

Shenhar and Dvir (2007) spent over fifteen years developing the PSAQ and have analyzed over 600 projects. To establish content validity, the authors conducted interviews of the project managers and project team members at the project site. The authors noted that the interviews provided them with insight on the many variables of project success. From the experience they gained through the interviews, the authors were able to develop a structured questionnaire to measure the success factors.

**Data Collection Technique**

The researcher first obtained permission from the Institutional Review Board at Liberty University (approval #3440) before beginning the recruiting and data collection process. A recruitment email explaining expectations was sent to members of the North Carolina Piedmont
Triad Chapter of the Project Management Institute (NCPTPMI) through the chapter contact. An email newsletter containing the survey link was also sent to the Carolinas AGC members through their chapter contact. Between the two organizations, the survey reached approximately 5400 potential participants.

The email contained a link to a survey the researcher created in SurveyMonkey. Of the 5400 possible participants, those who were willing to participate clicked the survey link, completed the informed consent, and answered the survey questions. The survey remained open for five weeks. To increase the response rate, the researcher attended the NCPTPMI annual conference during the survey period and recruited 58 of the 214 participants. The NCPTPMI granted the researcher permission to address the audience and to set up a table where he could explain the purpose of his study to potential participants. The researcher emailed the survey link to the 58 participants at the conference and each participant completed the survey on his phone. The results were compiled on SurveyMonkey and were available only to the researcher.

**Data Organization Techniques**

The ELQ section on participative decision-making contained six questions, each arranged on a Likert scale that could easily be converted to a numerical scale. This scale was converted to a numerical scale by using the number one to indicate a response of “never” and five to indicate a response of “always.” When the researcher totaled the scores, the higher scores were indicative of a more participative leadership style, and a lower score corresponded with a more autocratic leadership style. Question six was reverse-coded, however, which required the researcher to reverse the scale on this item to maintain the higher score evaluation system.

The researcher used a similar method for the PSAQ portion of the survey. The researcher chose to use the short-term measures of efficiency, impact on customer/user, impact on team,
and overall success to examine project success. Since the participant criteria included projects completed within solely the last two years, the researcher did not include the long-term measures of preparation for the future and business/direct organizational success. Shenhar and Dvir (2007) explained that one to two years must pass before measuring direct business/organizational success, where preparing for the future requires two to five years. The 16 questions that were part of this survey were presented on a four-point Likert scale with a fifth option of “not applicable.” These questions were also converted to a numerical scale to evaluate project success based on higher scores.

The researcher chose to include four demographic questions to describe the sample. These demographic questions included position (project manager or team member), sex of the participant, sex of the project manager, and organizational tenure. In addition, the researcher asked four questions to ensure the participants met the population requirements.

The data was password-protected on the researcher’s computer where only he could access the data. When the survey closed, the results were compiled and averaged in Excel and later moved into SPSS for statistical analysis. The survey was anonymous to the researcher and there was no way to trace the answers to any individual. After three years, the data will be destroyed by deleting the files.

**Data Analysis**

The researcher used Microsoft Excel and Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to analyze all data in this study. The objective of this quantitative correlational study was to examine the relationship between participative leadership and project success. The following explains the data analysis process used in this study.
Variables Used in the Study

The independent variable in this study, leadership style, was measured using the ELQ (Arnold et al., 2000). Participants answered 38 questions in five categories to indicate their perception of the project manager’s leadership style. The independent variable used to test the first hypothesis was “participative leadership” and represented an average of the participant’s answers to all 38 questions on the survey. The average data is scale data (G. Morgan, Leach, Gloeckner, & Barrett, 2013) and describes the frequency by which managers exhibit specific participative leadership behaviors as perceived by the survey respondents. For example, the survey item “the project manager listens to my work group’s ideas and suggestions” required an answer of “always,” “often,” “sometimes,” “rarely,” or “never,”. This data was quantified by assigning a value of one to “never” and a value of five to “always,” with numbers two through four assigned sequentially to the “rarely,” “sometimes,” and “often” choices. The one exception was question 20, “makes decisions that are based only on his/her ideas” that was reverse coded, making it necessary to reverse the numerical scores on this survey item. In analysis, higher total scores were indicative of managers who have a more participative style, and lower scores indicated a more autocratic style.

Testing the second hypothesis required the use of the individual factors of participative leadership identified by Arnold et al. (2000). Each factor was scalar and an independent variable in the second hypothesis tests. The independent variables are coaching, leading by example, informing, participative decision-making, and concern for the team.

The dependent variable for both hypotheses, project success, was measured using the PSAQ (Shenhar & Dvir, 2007). Since this was a four-point scale, there were outliers, and the frequency was not normally distributed, indicating ordinal data. Participants ranked their
perception of project success by answering questions that measure project efficiency, impact on customer/user, impact on the team, and overall success. The researcher did not include two sections of the PSAQ, direct benefits to business and direct organizational success and preparing for the future, as Shenhar et al. (2001) indicated these would take longer than two years to accurately assess. Since the participants were asked to rate their perception of project success on a project they had completed within the last two years, the researcher reasoned that these measures could not be measured accurately. Therefore, it is possible that projects that are unsuccessful today may eventually become viewed as successful, the reverse of which is also true. The PSAQ is a Likert scale that was also analyzed numerically by assigning sequential numerical values for each of the options. The researcher assigned a value of one to “strongly disagree” and a value of four to “strongly agree,” with the values of two and three representing the other two choices. There was also a “not applicable” choice that participants choose if the information was not known or did not pertain to the project.

The problem addressed in this study is that project managers do not recognize that their leadership style may not be appropriate to achieve project success (L. Yang et al., 2011). Jiang (2014) indicated that leadership style should receive more attention in project success research as it is one of the most important determining factors of project success (Zimmerer & Yasin, 1998). To address this gap, this study examined the relationship of participative leadership and project success using leadership style as the independent variable and project success as the dependent variable.

**Hypothesis and Variables**

The researcher tested for correlation between participative leadership (the independent variable), and project success (the dependent variable). Spearman’s rho was used to examine the
relationship between two variables when one is continuous in nature (G. Morgan et al., 2013). The researcher computed Spearman’s rho to answer the research question of what relationship, if any, exists between participative management and project success? The strength of the relationship increases as the correlation coefficient approaches one, and weaker as it approaches zero (Salkind, 2013). Spearman’s rho values closer to -1 are indicative of a negative relationship, while values closer to +1 are indicative of a positive relationship (Salkind, 2013). A positive or negative relationship that is significant at the p<.05 level indicates the existence of a relationship (Salkind, 2013) and will cause the researcher to reject the null hypothesis, as a relationship can be established.

The second hypothesis, there is no statistically significant relationship between project success and coaching, leading by example, participative decision-making, informing, and leader-team interaction, was also tested using Spearman’s rho. The researcher had planned to use multiple regression to analyze the effect each factor of participative leadership has on project success, but multicollinearity tests indicated a strong correlation between the independent variables. G. Morgan et al. (2013) explains that multicollinearity exists when there are high intercorrelations between predictor variables. Hair, Black, Babin, and Anderson (2014) noted that in tests with high multicollinearity, coefficients can be completely reversed from their expected value and explained that researchers should revert to a bivariate correlation to describe the relationship. For this reason, the researcher used Spearman’s rho to measure the strength of the correlation between each individual factor of participative leadership and project success.
Table 1: *Variables used in the study*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Variable Type</th>
<th>Type of Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project Success</td>
<td>Dependent</td>
<td>Ordinal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participative Leadership</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leads by Example</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informing</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concern for Team</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participative Decision-Making</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Scale</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Reliability and Validity**

The reliability of a test instrument is a measurement of the consistency of a test instrument, while validity is a measure of the degree to which the instrument measures what it is intended to measure. Salkind (2013) noted that the establishment of reliability and validity of research instruments is crucial in a study. The author explained that a hypothesis cannot be tested with tools that are invalid or unreliable. In other words, if the researcher does not know if the tool measures accurately what it is intended to measure, then the resulting data could be a result of faulty test tools rather than a confirmation or rejection of a null hypothesis. This section explains the reliability and validity of the instruments used in this study.

**Reliability**

The ELQ is a test instrument created by Arnold et al. (2000) to measure empowering leadership. The researcher selected the ELQ because it is both a reliable and valid instrument for the measurement of participative leadership (Arnold et al., 2000; Fong & Snape, 2015). Arnold et al. (2000) measured five dimensions of empowering leadership with this survey: (1) leading
by example, (2) participative decision-making, (3) coaching, (4) informing, and (5) showing concern/interacting with team. Cronbach’s alpha, one of the most commonly used measures of reliability (Bonett & Wright, 2015), was found to exceed 0.85 for all five of the scales, indicating acceptable internal consistency (Arnold et al., 2000).

The PSAQ was used to measure project success in five dimensions: impact on customer, business and direct organizational success, project efficiency, and preparation for the future (Shenhar et al., 2001). The PSAQ was found to have high internal consistency by (Nwagbogwu, 2011), who noted the Cronbach’s alpha coefficients ranged from 0.78 to 0.93. Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) indicated that alpha scores above 0.70 should be considered as acceptable reliability scores. Ahmed and bin Mohamad (2016) described the PSAQ as “the most reliable scale found in the literature for measurement of five-dimensional project success” (p. 58).

**Validity**

Content validity, criterion validity, and construct validity (Salkind, 2013) are three types of validity that can be established in an instrument. Content validity is a measure of how well the items are representative of the test domain and is measured by the judgment of experts in the field. Criterion validity is tested by comparing the results of the test to actual performance, either now (concurrent validity) or in the future (predictive validity). Finally, construct validity measurements are comparisons with other known valid tests to ensure the measurements correlate positively (if the test measures the same construct) or negatively (if the test measures the opposite construct).

Arnold et al. (2000) established content validity when they created this study by first interviewing leaders and subordinates of three empowering organizations in different fields: a telecommunications corporation, a clothing retailer, and a building products supplier. The
authors identified and coded 125 separate empowering leadership behaviors which they grouped into eight categories. A second study with a group of 205 employees reduced the original eight dimensions to five. Arnold et al. (2000) relied on the judgments of experts when reducing these dimensions to ensure content validity.

Arnold et al. (2000) established construct validity by administering the ELQ along with two other leadership scales, the Leadership Behavior Questionnaire (LBDQ) and the Managerial Practices Survey (MPS). A simple correlational analysis demonstrated that the Pearson product-moment correlations between the ELQ and the LBDQ and MPS were all positive and significant at the $p = 0.001$ level (Arnold et al., 2000). A regression analysis of the five measurements of the ELQ showed that the measurements of coaching, participative decision-making, and showing concern/interaction yielded a stronger relation to the LBDQ (0.62 to 0.67) and the MPS (0.65 to 0.69), but a lower relation on the leading by example and informing factors (0.51-0.57) indicating these factors are more unique to the ELQ. Arnold et al. (2000).

The PSAQ was developed and validated by Shenhar and Dvir (2007). The authors spent over 15 years developing the PSAQ. During this time, they analyzed over 600 projects and conducted interviews with project team members and project managers to establish relevant measures for examining project success. The authors further refined this scale through a quantitative analysis of 127 projects to identify project success measures. The PSAQ is a widely used survey to measure project success and has been used for decades by scholars (Assudani & Kloppenburg, 2010).

**Summary**

This study examines the relationship between participative leadership styles and project success. An understanding of leadership styles addresses a gap in the leadership literature.
Zimmerer and Yasin (1998) asserted that leadership is a crucial factor in project success, yet leadership receives little attention in project success research (Jiang, 2014). This research project has helped to determine leadership styles that correlate with project success and can be used by practitioners to recruit and develop future project managers. In the next section, the researcher shares the results of the study, explains the conclusions of that analysis, and suggests areas for future research.
Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between participative leadership and project success. The researcher used a survey methodology to assess the respondents’ perception of their leader’s participative leadership behaviors and the level of success achieved on the project in three dimensions: project efficiency, impact on the team, and impact on the customer/user. Two professional organizations were chosen to gain access to project managers and project team members across different industries and across two different states, North Carolina and South Carolina. This section begins with an overview of the study and the presentation of the findings, followed by a discussion of the practical application of the results.

Overview of the Study

In this non-experimental correlational study, the researcher sought to answer the research question: What, if any, relationship exists between participative leadership and project success? The researcher used the ELQ and the PSAQ to assess the leadership style of the project manager and the success level of the project. Participants were asked to consider the leadership style used on the last project they completed and to assess the success of the project in terms of efficiency, impact on the team, and impact on the customer/user. The responses provided a perspective of overall leadership style as well as a perspective on the five individual factors of participative leadership identified by Arnold et al. (2000): coaching, participative decision-making, informing, leading by example, and concern for the team. Surveys were disseminated to two professional project management organizations that provided the 214 responses analyzed in this study.

The findings indicate a statistically significant correlation between participative leadership behaviors and project success. This indicates that project managers who exhibit
participative behaviors also experience higher levels of project success. The results also indicate a statistically significant, positive relationship between each of the five factors of participative leadership and project success.

The explanation of the relationship of participative leadership and project success addresses a gap in the project management literature. Research has indicated that project success rates are below an acceptable level across many industries (Izmailov et al., 2016; Rivera & Kashiwagi, 2016). Jiang (2014) noted that leadership receives little attention in project management research despite surveys indicating leadership is one of the most important determinants of project success (Zimmerer & Yasin, 1998). Though this study does not indicate a causal relationship, the results do reinforce the position of Zimmerer and Yasin (1998) and determines that leadership and success are related.

**Presentation of the Findings**

In this study, the researcher sought to answer the following research question: What, if any relationship exists between participative leadership and project success? The researcher chose a non-experimental correlational quantitative study to answer the research question. The researcher surveyed project team members and project managers who were affiliated with the NCPTPMI and the Carolinas AGC to address the research question.

The researcher conducted all statistical tests using Microsoft Excel 2016 and IBM SPSS Statistics. The survey was administered via SurveyMonkey and distributed to participants through an email link and in person at the North Carolina Piedmont Triad Project Management Institute Annual Conference. The survey was also sent via email newsletter to members of the Carolinas AGC. The recipient list for the NCPTPMI included approximately 2400 members, and the email from the Carolinas AGC reached approximately 3000 individuals. There were 413
participants who began the survey, however, not all fit the population requirements to take the
survey. The researcher removed the responses from those who did not complete the survey (51),
indicated that they were not project managers or project team members (50), had not completed a
project in the last two years (41), or indicated they did not work for a project-related business
(34). Responses from participants who did not provide any information on leadership style (23)
were deleted, leaving a total of 214 responses. This corresponds to a response rate of 3.96%, or
214 responses out of 5400.

There were 137 male participants and 77 female participants in the study. There were 122
participants who indicated they were project managers on their last project, while 92 indicated
they were project team members. The participants also provided information on organizational
tenure. Their responses indicated that 46 had been employed with their organization for less than
three years, 42 from three to five years, 40 from five to 10 years, 39 from 10 to 15 years, and 47
indicated they were employed at their organization for more than 15 years.

The independent variable, leadership style, is an average of each participant’s responses
to the 38 questions on the ELQ. G. Morgan et al. (2013) explained that the average of a Likert
scale that measures the same construct is scale data if there are at least five ordered levels and the
frequencies of the scores are approximately normally distributed. The PSAQ, though, is
comprised of 16 questions on a four-point Likert scale which does not meet this qualification.
Norman (2010), by contrast, found parametric statistics will still provide accurate conclusions
when used with Likert data, unequal variances, and non-normal frequency distributions.

The researcher tested the assumption of normality to determine the appropriate bivariate
correlation test. The results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests below in Table 1 indicate the data
does not follow a normal distribution. For project success, the results show that the data is
significant at $D(214) = .076$, $p < .0005$, and for participative leadership, $D(214) = .071$, $p < .05$, indicating a rejection of the null hypothesis of normal distribution, as there is insufficient evidence to conclude that the data is normally distributed.

Table 2

*Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test of Normality*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tests of Normality</th>
<th>Kolmogorov-Smirnov&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Shapiro-Wilk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Statistic</td>
<td>df</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Success</td>
<td>.076</td>
<td>214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participative Leadership</td>
<td>.071</td>
<td>214</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup> Lilliefors Significance Correction

Field (2018) suggested that researchers should be cautious not to solely use a K-S test to determine normality. It is better, the author suggested, to check the skewness and kurtosis of the data as well as examining a histogram to determine if the data appears to be normally distributed. The histograms for project success and leadership style are shown below in Figure 3 and Figure 4 and appear to be negatively skewed, though project success appears to be approximately normal. The researcher confirmed this by checking for kurtosis and skewness (Table 3). The skewness of -.579 and -.615 are within the acceptable tolerances of -1.0 to 1.0 (G. Morgan et al., 2013), and the kurtosis, a measure of the tendency for the data to peak above or below the normal curve, is .536 (project success) and .009 (leadership style). G. Morgan et al. (2013) indicated kurtosis is a minimal concern for researchers, as it does not affect the results of most statistical analyses.
Outliers were another concern in the data analysis. As shown in the box plots in Figure 5, there are five outliers for project success and one outlier for leadership style. The researcher examined the responses and determined the outliers were not the result of errant data entry. There was no missing data, as shown in Table 4, and the responses appeared to be the accurate responses of the participants. Hair et al. (2014) described these types of outliers as “extraordinary observations” (p. 65) and noted that they should be retained if the researcher...
determines they are valid representations of an element of the population. These outliers pertain to projects that were less successful than the norm, or leadership styles that were particularly autocratic, and thus, should not be removed from the analysis.

![Boxplots for Project Success and Leadership Style](image)

*Figure 5. Boxplots for Project Success and Leadership Style*

**Table 4**

*Case Processing Summary*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Valid</th>
<th></th>
<th>Cases</th>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Missing N</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Success</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership Style</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Despite the results of the K-S test, the data could be classified as normal. There are three factors that influenced the researcher’s decision to use the non-parametric Spearman’s *rho* test to analyze the relationship between leadership style and project success. First, the Likert scale for project success only contained four-levels, one less than G. Morgan et al. (2013) indicated is acceptable to be deemed scale data. Second, the distribution of the data is not conclusively normally distributed. Finally, the presence of outliers that may affect parametric tests will not
affect Spearman’s rho, as the outliers are reduced to a rank instead of their actual values. G. Morgan et al. (2013) suggested that when the assumptions of the Pearson product moment correlation are markedly violated, then the nonparametric equivalent, the Spearman’s rho, is appropriate. Therefore, the researcher chose to use Spearman’s rho to test the relationship between leadership style and project success.

Spearman’s rho is computed by ranking the data for each variable and then computing the Pearson product moment correlation (G. Morgan et al., 2013). Once again, the assumptions must be tested to ensure that its use is appropriate. The assumptions for Spearman rho are: (1) data on both variables are at least ordinal and (2) scores on one variable are monotonically related to the other. The dependent variable, project success, has only four ordered levels and is not normally distributed. The independent variable, leadership, has five levels but is not normally distributed, as indicated above. Therefore, both variables are at least ordinal and meet the first assumption for the use of Spearman’s rho.

The second assumption is that scores on one variable are monotonically related to the other variable. A monotonic relationship is defined by G. Morgan et al. (2013) as a relationship in which one variable increases as the other increases. The researcher tested this assumption by creating a scatterplot of the variables project success and leadership, shown in Figure 6. The scatterplot appears to be monotonic. There is a substantial amount of variance, but the relationship does not appear to be U-shaped or J-shaped, which would indicate the absence of a monotonic relationship. The scatterplots indicate the data meets the assumption of a monotonic relationship and thus Spearman’s rho is appropriate.
Figure 6. Simple Scatter of Project Success by Leadership Style

The results of the Spearman’s \( \rho \) test are shown below in Table 5. There is a moderate positive correlation between participative leadership and project success, \( r_s = .422 \). Leadership styles that are more participative are moderately associated with an increase in project success, \( r_s(214) = .422, p < .0005 \).

Table 5. Hypothesis 1 results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Project Success</th>
<th>Leadership Style</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spearman’s rho</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Success</td>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership Style</td>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td>.422**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>214</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

A Spearman’s \( \rho \) test was also conducted to test hypothesis two, there is no statistically significant relationship between project success and coaching, leading by example, participative decision-making, informing, and leader-team interaction. Spearman’s \( \rho \) was run with each individual variable to determine if each dimension of participative leadership style correlated with project success. Testing the second hypothesis began with testing the assumptions for
Spearman’s rho: (1) the variables must be measured on a continuous or ordinal scale and (2) there must be a monotonic relationship between the independent and dependent variables.

Participant’s scores for the five questions under “leads by example” were averaged to arrive at a single score for “leads by example.” The independent variable, coaching, was calculated similarly by averaging the responses to the eleven questions associated with coaching. “Participative decision-making” and “informing” were averaged from six questions each, while there were ten questions associated with “showing concern/interacting with team” in which the responses were averaged. The resulting variables, an average of Likert Scale data with five levels, is scale data (G. Morgan et al., 2013). However, since project success, the same dependent variable from above, does not have five ordered levels, it cannot be characterized as scale data in accordance with G. Morgan et al. (2013). The data met the first assumption, the variables are measured on a continuous or ordinal scale.

The second assumption is the monotonic relationship of the variables. A monotonic relationship means that one variable should increase as the other increases (G. Morgan et al., 2013). The scatterplots of each variable with project success, shown in Figure 7, demonstrate that a monotonic relationship exists between each independent variable and the dependent variable, project success. There is no evidence of a U-shape or J-shape, which would violate the assumption of a monotonic relationship (G. Morgan et al., 2013).

The data met the assumptions for Spearman’s rho. The results, shown in Table 6, indicate there is a statistically significant relationship between each variable and project success. There is a statistically moderate correlation between project success and coaching, \( r_s(212) = .423, p < .0005 \); showing concern \( r_s(212) = .403, p < .0005 \); informing \( r_s(212) = .383, p < .0005 \);
leading by example, \( r_d(212) = .328, \ p < .0005 \); and participative decision-making, \( r_d(212) = .322, \ p < .0005 \).

\[ \begin{align*}
&\text{Figure 7. Simple Scatterplots of each independent variable by project success} \\
\end{align*} \]
Table 6

**Hypothesis 2 Results**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correlations</th>
<th>Project Success</th>
<th>Informing</th>
<th>Showing Concern</th>
<th>Leads By Example</th>
<th>Coaching</th>
<th>Participative Decision-Making</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spearman's rho</td>
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<td>.383**</td>
<td>.403**</td>
<td>.326**</td>
<td>.423**</td>
<td>.322**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informed</td>
<td>.393**</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.770**</td>
<td>.649**</td>
<td>.901**</td>
<td>.653**</td>
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<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>214</td>
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<td>214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Showing Concern</td>
<td>.403**</td>
<td>.770**</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.716**</td>
<td>.851**</td>
<td>.763**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leads By Example</td>
<td>.326**</td>
<td>.649**</td>
<td>.716**</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.778**</td>
<td>.687**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
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<td>214</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>214</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coaching</td>
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<td>.801**</td>
<td>.851**</td>
<td>.778**</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.769**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
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<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participative Decision-Making</td>
<td>.322**</td>
<td>.653**</td>
<td>.763**</td>
<td>.687**</td>
<td>.758**</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig (2-tailed)</td>
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<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>214</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Hypothesis 1: Overall Participative Leadership and Project Success**

**H01:** There is no statistically significant relationship between overall participative leadership and project success.

**H1:** A statistically significant relationship exists between overall participative leadership and project success.

The outcome of the Spearman rank order correlation coefficient analysis indicated that there is a statistically significant correlation between leadership style and project success, $r_s(214) = .422$, $p < .0005$. Therefore, the rejection of the null hypothesis, that there is no statistically significant relationship between overall participative leadership and project success, is
warranted. The alternative hypothesis, a statistically significant relationship exists between overall participative leadership and project success, is accepted.

**Hypothesis 2: The Factors of Participative Leadership and Project Success**

- **H02:** There is no statistically significant relationship between project success and coaching, leading by example, participative decision-making, informing, and leader-team interaction.

- **H2:** There is a statistically significant relationship between project success and coaching, leading by example, participative decision-making, informing, and leader-team interaction.

A Spearman’s rank order correlation was run to assess the relationship between each of the independent variables (coaching, showing concern, informing, leading by example, and participative decision-making) from the 214 participants of the study. The preliminary analysis of scatterplots indicated a monotonic relationship between each independent variable and project success. There was a statistically significant positive relationship between coaching and project success, \( r_s(212) = .423 \); showing concern and project success \( r_s(212) = .403 \); informing and project success, \( r_s(212) = .383, p < .0005 \); leading by example and project success, \( r_s(212) = .328, p < .0005 \); and participative decision-making and project success, \( r_s(212) = .322, p < .0005 \).

Since the relationships between each of the variables are statistically significant, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis, that there is a statistically significant relationship between project success and coaching, leading by example, participative decision-making, informing, and leader-team interaction, was accepted.

This quantitative correlational research study examined the construct of leadership as it relates to project success to answer the research question “what, if any relationship exists
between participative leadership and project success?” The findings of the study indicate that: (1) there is a moderate positive monotonic relationship between participative leadership and project success and (2) that a moderate relationship exists between each of the components of participative leadership (coaching, showing concern, informing, leading by example, and participative decision-making) and project success. An important note is Spearman’s rho indicates that there is a relationship, but this does not necessarily establish that the leadership style causes project success, as there may be other underlying factors that contribute to the relationship.

The salient findings of this study are that participative leadership is positively associated with project success ($r_s = .422$) and that each of the components of participative leadership is positively associated with project success. When participative leadership is broken down into its components, coaching was observed to be the most positively correlated with project success, $r_s(212) = .423$, $p < .0005$, which has almost the same relationship with project success as overall participative leadership. Participative decision-making and leading by example, however, had a comparatively weaker relationship with project success than coaching or showing concern.

**Summary of the Findings**

The results support existing literature that demonstrates a positive relationship between participative leadership and organizational success (Miao et al., 2014; Newman et al., 2016). Although this study did not establish causality, the relationship indicates the possibility that the benefits of participative leadership in an organizational context also apply in temporary work groups which often describe project teams. In the organizational context, participative leadership leads to higher performance, organizational citizenship behavior, and other positive work behaviors (Miao et al., 2014).
The conceptual framework suggests that participative leadership leads to an increase in stakeholder engagement, and stakeholder engagement influences project success. Fassin et al. (2016) found that participation is crucial in operation management and that stakeholder participation in decision-making is important to organizational success. This suggests that participation in decision-making is also critical to project success. The results of this study indicate that though participation in decision-making is positively related to project success, participative decision-making is not the variable with the strongest correlation with project success. Instead, coaching was found to have the strongest positive association with project success. A manager’s coaching behaviors include helping work groups determine training needs, suggesting ways to improve performance, encouraging problem-solving and information exchange, providing help, paying attention, and providing support (Arnold et al., 2000). As Alfes et al. (2013) described, employees are more engaged when they develop social connections with their leaders and team members. Leaders who facilitate these relationships through coaching are more likely to increase team communication, members’ sense of belongingness, and pride (Yoerger et al., 2015). Therefore, the results suggest that coaching behaviors may be the root of participative leadership, and therefore, it can be expected that the coaching variable has the strongest relationship with project success. The results could also mean that managers who exhibit coaching behaviors are more likely to inform and interact with their team, share information, set a good example, and ask for participation in decisions.

**Applications to Professional Practice**

The results of this study show that participative leadership and project success are positively correlated. The moderate strength of this relationship indicates that project managers who engage in participative leadership behaviors tend to experience higher levels of project
success. The findings also indicate the importance of the five areas of participative leadership: coaching, participative-decision making, informing, concern for the team, and leading by example. The researcher found coaching behaviors to be the participative leadership factor that was most strongly correlated with project success. The findings indicate that the correlation between coaching and project success was stronger than the correlation between overall participative leadership and project success, which indicates coaching is the most crucial of the participative leadership behaviors.

The results can be applied in hiring decisions for future project managers as well as professional development for current project managers. The benefits of training and development are especially beneficial to young leaders who often cannot rely on participative leadership because the effectiveness of participative leadership behaviors is dependent on personal influence (Buengeler, Homan, & Voelpel, 2016). Providing coaching and training to younger leaders may help them overcome some of the potential challenges related to their age (Buengeler et al., 2016).

Although this study has demonstrated a statistically significant relationship, it is also important to note that project success is a concept that can be defined in many different ways. Shenhar and Dvir (2007) described five project success factors that are indicative of project success: (1) efficiency, (2) impact on the customer, (3) impact on the team, (4) business and direct organizational success, and (5) preparing for the future. The first three factors can either be measured during the project or directly after project completion; however, business/organizational success and preparing for the future cannot be measured until one to five years after project completion. The time required to measure each dimension suggests projects that are unsuccessful in the short-term may prove to be extremely successful in the long-term,
and the reverse is also true. The multifaceted nature of project success requires the project manager to ensure that all stakeholders agree on the criteria for success in the early stages of the project. The most important criteria for project success is impact on the customer (Shenhar & Dvir, 2007). Project managers must therefore be attentive to the needs of the customer and ensure that all stakeholders agree on the definition of success for each project.

Participative leaders also encourage their followers toward achieving established goals. In project management, this could lead to improvements in risk management and efficiency (McCleskey, 2014). In addition, the project manager who better understands the characteristics associated with participative leadership is more likely to recognize his own weaknesses and compensate for them (Muzio, Fisher, Thomas, & Peters, 2007). Lloyd-Walker and Walker (2011) noted that leaders who can identify their own strengths and weaknesses are also better able to recognize the strengths and weaknesses of others and place high importance on employee development. The findings of this study are applicable to companies engaged in project management by identifying the key aspects of participative leadership that are most related to project success and helping managers develop the managerial skill sets to effectively lead projects.

The most effective leaders are those who do not seek power for its own sake (Meyer & Meijers, 2018). Those who rise to levels of power, including project managers, should use that power not for their own benefit but to further the mission of the organization. The biblical story of Nehemiah demonstrates the benefits of a participative leadership style and a leader that remained focused on his people and the objectives of the project.

Nehemiah was a cup bearer serving under King Artaxerxes when the king noticed his sad appearance (Nehemiah 2:1). Nehemiah told the king he was sad because the walls of Jerusalem
had been torn down under the reign of King Nebuchadnezzar. He then asked the king if he could go and rebuild the city (Nehemiah 2:5). Nehemiah informed the Jewish leaders of his goal to rebuild the city, clearly explained the goals of the project, and made connections with the team that would eventually rebuild the wall around Jerusalem. Nehemiah’s project was ultimately successful because he sought God’s plan and asked for His guidance throughout the project. Nehemiah overcame opposition and turned to God, praying day and night that his team and his efforts would be protected from the attacks of their enemies (Nehemiah 4:1). He was willing to work alongside his team, even when his life was in jeopardy (Nehemiah 6:12). These actions display Nehemiah’s concern for his followers and support for his team. These participative leadership behaviors guided the team to a successful project, the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem.

Much like the example of Nehemiah, participative leadership involves care and concern for followers and taking actions in accordance with the team’s best interests while accomplishing the mission. Jesus showed this care and compassion with his disciples as He came as a servant leader, especially in his teaching and guidance. He knew that His disciples would be tasked with the greatest project of all after His earthly life, as they would be called to spread the gospel throughout the world. An example of His leadership style is illustrated in John (13:12-15) as He washes His disciples’ feet while teaching them that they, too, should follow His example and serve those they are called to lead.

Paul writes in Philippians, “Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves” (Philippians 2:3, English Standard Version). Project managers who follow this biblical principle by seeking to understand, listen, coach, and support their followers will experience higher levels of project success. This study demonstrates
that all the above principles are associated with project success. By following the leadership principles learned from the Bible and turning toward God to guide their steps, project managers are setting an example for their team to follow. Project managers who take the time to communicate, listen, coach, and include their followers in decisions are following a biblical example that will lead to success.

**Recommendations for Action**

The researcher’s goal in this project was to examine the relationship between participative leadership and project success as well as the relationship of the individual factors of participative leadership and project success. The results indicate that a statistically significant positive correlation exists between participative leadership and project success. The results also indicate a positive correlation between project success and coaching, informing, leading by example, participative-decision-making, and concern for the team. The results of this study suggest that business may benefit from leadership development programs that model the participative behaviors described in this study. In addition, organizations may benefit from hiring and promotion practices that effectively identify participative leadership characteristics in future project managers.

The implementation of the findings begins with identifying the participative behaviors of aspiring project managers. Organizations can implement a screening process to determine if the project manager exhibits the behavioral characteristics that align with participative leadership behaviors. Depending on the type of project, many project managers only hold a formal leadership role for a short period of time, like the duration of the project (Kuster et al., 2015). The use of a tool, such as the ELQ, will help organizations choose the appropriate leaders to fill project management positions. The extent to which the project manager understands his role and
exercises his power will determine the quality of his leadership and ultimately the success of the project (Kuster et al., 2015). Kuster et al. (2015) suggested that top managers should consider the coaching behaviors exhibited by the individuals they choose to fill project management positions. The results of this study support the suggestions of Kuster et al. (2015) to seek participative behaviors, and especially coaching behaviors, when selecting project managers.

The next step in the process is for organizations to develop a culture that encourages participative leadership. Leadership development efforts must not solely focus on the project manager, but also on the followers through creating a culture of trust and respect (Pinnington & Tourish, 2009). An inclusive culture involves the leadership skills of flexibility, fluidity, self-awareness, and conscientiousness, and the willingness to encourage the participation of others (Gotsis & Grimani, 2016). Organizations with cultures not conducive to participative leadership will want to reevaluate their culture to determine if their current leadership styles may be an impediment to progress. Pinnington and Tourish (2009) explained that organizations that have been dominated by autocratic leadership have difficulty transitioning to participative leadership because dissenters tend to view the practice as idealistic and impractical. Project managers and their organizations can use this study to help implement programs and organizational changes to increase their use of participative leadership by choosing strategies to involve and empower those within their organizations.

This study is beneficial to individuals and organizations that seek to understand the variables associated with project success. Although leadership is certainly not the sole factor associated with project success, it offers a perspective as to areas companies can emphasize to experience greater project success. The results of this study will be available in the ProQuest database for those who search participative leadership, and the researcher will speak to project
management professional organizations concerning the results of this study and the implications to organizations.

**Recommendations for Further Study**

The goal of this study was to examine the relationship between participative leadership style and project success. This paper addresses the research gap in the understanding of how leadership affects project success. The results of this quantitative, non-experimental study found the existence of a significant positive relationship between participative leadership and project success and a significant positive relationship between each of the five factors of participative leadership and project success. Tyssen, Wald, and Spieth (2013) explained that most existing leadership theories assume a permanent organizational environment and that comparatively little is known about how the influence of leadership theories in a temporary environment. This study answered a call to research the underlying factors through which leadership styles influence project success (Aga et al., 2016; Ding et al., 2017; Müller & Turner, 2010; L. Yang et al., 2011).

There are several recommendations for further study based on the findings of this research study. The population for this study was accessed through two professional organizations, the NCPTPMI and the Carolinas AGC. The NCPTPMI is a membership organization with members that are from the Winston-Salem, High Point, and Greensboro areas of North Carolina. The Carolinas AGC is a professional organization of general contractors in North and South Carolina. Therefore, one recommendation is to replicate the study with other populations to verify that the results of this study can be replicated in other regions with different populations.
Another limitation of this study was that the population encompassed all project team members and project managers within these professional organizations regardless of their industry. Future studies may offer additional information on the relationship of participative leadership and project success as it relates to specific industries. For example, by some estimates, information technology projects experience a 70% failure rate (Ingason & Shepherd, 2014), only 2.5% of construction projects are successful in terms of efficiency and meeting business objectives (Rivera & Kashiwagi, 2016), and around 70% of megaprojects fail to meet their objectives (Lichtenberg, 2016). A future study that focuses on the leadership styles for each specific industry could help determine if the influence of participative leadership differs depending on industry.

Future studies of participative leadership in nations culturally different from the United States may provide another perspective of participative leadership. A comparison of cultural dimensions using Hofstede’s framework shows that American workers have leadership expectations that may differ from the expectations in other countries. For example, when compared to China, US workers prefer lower power distance, indicating employees expect equal distributions of power and are more likely to expect leaders to consider their ideas and suggestions (Sharma & Kirkman, 2015; Taras, Steel, & Kirkman, 2012). Participative leadership is more likely to be successful in cultures with low power distance, low individualism, and with high uncertainty avoidance (Sharma & Kirkman, 2015). A research project that examines the effects of cultural dimensions on the relationship between participative leadership and project success adds another dimension that would be beneficial in developing a comprehensive understanding of participative project leadership.
Finally, the study found that coaching is the participative leadership factor that is most strongly correlated with project success. A leader who exhibits strong coaching behaviors engages in actions that support and encourage his staff and invests in understanding the unique aspects of his subordinates to bring out the best in each of them. A future qualitative case study may help understand the underlying reasons that coaching is the participative leadership factor most strongly associated with coaching. Developing a stronger understanding of the specific aspects of coaching and how it influences team performance will be beneficial to businesses in planning development and training programs for future project managers.

**Reflections**

Participative leadership has been a longstanding topic of interest for the researcher who has had the opportunity to work for seven different superiors over the course of his twenty-year career. Each individual leader brings a different set of talents to the workplace and guides their subordinates in their own unique way. Some leaders look within for answers and feel the responsibility for knowledge and guidance comes from their own background and expertise, while others have led with an understanding that they are not supposed to have all the answers or know the direction. In the experience of the researcher, the latter are the ones who have had the most success because it is the latter group that turns to the expertise of their group, asks for input, gains support, and acts with the full support of their staff. Different perspectives give these leaders a holistic view of each challenge they encounter, and the alternative viewpoints lead to better decisions, even though gaining consensus adds additional time to the decision process.

The researcher, from his own experience, had preconceived notions that participative leadership would be correlated with project success, and the results indicate that this is the case. However, the majority of the responses were a result of the online link. There were fifty-eight
responses that were collected in person at the NCPTPMI annual meeting. At this meeting, the researcher simply sent a link to each participant who indicated interest and collected their responses, not sharing his personal beliefs on participative leadership or affecting their answers. The participants were not known to the researcher and he had no influence over their responses.

The researcher also began the study with the preconceived notion that participative decision-making would be the most important factor in project success. The results indicate that this is not true. Instead, coaching is the most strongly correlated and participative decision-making was actually the weakest of the five dimensions. As a result, the researcher’s perspective on coaching has changed. The most important traits for a participative leader, coaching traits, are those behaviors that help subordinates find their weak points, emphasize and grow their strong points, and develop good communications between all members of the team.

Participative leadership is aligned with biblical principles, as the style is characterized by taking the input of others into account. Proverbs 16:9 (New International Version) explains the role God plays in the lives of his followers, “In their hearts humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps.” This verse demonstrates that the Lord allows His people to chart their own path, but if they seek His guidance, He will help them achieve their purpose.

The Bible provides many examples of leaders who have had the best interests of their people at heart. When Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt, God allowed Moses to choose his own course. Moses was concerned about his speech and was afraid to speak to Pharaoh on behalf of his people. God sent Moses’s brother, Aaron, along with him (Exodus 7:1). It took great strength for Moses and Aaron to stand up to Pharaoh, but in doing so he demonstrated that good leaders look out for their people’s best interests.
Great leaders also coach their people. Coaching is concerned with helping people find a better way to accomplish their goals by recognizing a person’s strengths and guiding them towards success in their lives and careers. An effective coaching relationship is based on Christian love for others. Jesus demonstrates this when he says, “Love the Lord God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’” (Matthew 22: 27-40, New International Version). Building effective relationships and seeking out the best interests of others enables leaders to understand how best to guide their followers to reach their fullest potential and spiritual calling. In the above example, God recognized leadership traits in Moses that Moses did not yet recognize himself. Moses is known today as one of the great leaders of the Bible, even though when he first received his calling; he was afraid because of his shortcomings (Exodus 6:30).

Participative leaders do not expect others to do what they will not do themselves. They understand the importance of working alongside those that they lead. The Apostle Paul opted to work as a tent maker for his own financial support rather than to accept the support of the church. He worked during the week and preached in the synagogues on the Sabbath in an effort to convert Jews and Greeks (Acts 18: 1-4). Paul explained his reason for not accepting support from his followers; he needed his followers to understand that he was preaching the Good News because he was sent by God to do so, not for his financial gain (1 Corinthians 9:18). Paul’s passion and his commitment to do the work of the people while sharing the Gospel added credibility to his message.

These principles are as evident today as they were in the days of the Bible. Characteristics shown by Moses and Paul indicate that successful leaders are those who will
support their people, work alongside them, and help them to develop their strengths. The great leaders of the world follow the greatest leader of them all, Jesus Christ, and show the same compassion and understanding for their own followers.

**Summary and Study Conclusions**

The purpose of this non-experimental quantitative study was to examine the relationship between participative leadership and project success. The sample consisted of members of two professional organizations in North Carolina and South Carolina that provided 214 responses to the survey that was sent via email and in person at the NCPTPMI chapter annual conference. The survey was comprised of one tool to measure participative leadership, the ELQ (Arnold et al., 2000) and another to measure project success, the PSAQ (Shenhar & Dvir, 2007).

The results of the study indicate that there is a statistically significant relationship between participative leadership and project success and that there is a statistically significant relationship between each factor of participative leadership and project success. The participative leadership factors measured in this study were coaching, participative decision-making, leading by example, concern for the team, and informing. Of the five factors, the one most strongly related to project success is coaching, \( r_s(212) = .423, p < .0005 \).

The study results show that an increase in participative leadership behaviors are positively associated with an increase in project success. Additionally, the findings of the second hypothesis indicate that project managers who exhibit the coaching behaviors of teaching, encouraging, helping, and supporting their teams experience higher levels of project success. These findings will help business leaders understand the leadership behaviors that correspond to higher success levels and can aid in the development of screening and training opportunities for current and future project managers.
This study answered a call to research the underlying factors through which leadership styles influence project success (Aga et al., 2016; Ding et al., 2017; Müller & Turner, 2010; L. Yang et al., 2011). As more businesses move toward project-based work, it is imperative that leaders understand the function of leadership in temporary environments and the challenges created by temporary work structures that are characterized by shorter durations and cross-functional teams. The results of this study indicate that the participative leadership style is an appropriate model for project management.
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doi:10.1111/caim.12045


Appendix A: The Survey

Survey removed to comply with copyright.
Appendix B: Permission to use the ELQ

7/8/2016

Empowering Leadership Questionnaire: Permissions Request

Josh Arnold <Josh.Arnold@csulb.edu>
Thu 7/5/2018 11:33 PM

To Taylor, Hunter <htaylor11@liberty.edu>;

2 attachments (193 KB)
ELQ-2000.doc, ELQ.pdf

Dear Hunter,

I have attached the ELQ and the paper describing the ELQ’s construction and validation. You are welcome to use it.

Best regards,

Josh

Professor of Human Resource Management
Department of Management/HRM
College of Business Administration
California State University, Long Beach
1250 Bellflower Boulevard
Long Beach, CA 90840
(562) 985-8604
Appendix C: Permission to use the PSAQ

Tim Cannon (Harvard Business Publishing - Permissions Team) <permissions@hbsp.harvard.edu>
Tue 6/12/2018 3:19 PM

To Taylor Hunter <htaylor11@liberty.edu>:

### Please type your reply above this line -###

**Conversation CCs (if any):**

Your request (738011) has been updated. To add additional comments, reply to this email.

---

Tim Cannon (Harvard Business Publishing)

Jun 12, 3:18 PM EDT

Dear Hunter S. Taylor, Doctor of Business Administration Candidate

Thank you for your email. As long as the requested HBP material is only being used to fulfill the class assignment in the pursuit of your degree, permission would be granted at no charge for use of the HBP Press book excerpt as long as the material is fully cited.

If the thesis/dissertation is later published or distributed as training material, however, then there may be a royalty charge for use of the requested HBP Press book material excerpt that would be based on how much material is used and the print run.

Regards,

Tim Cannon
Permissions Coordinator
HARVARD BUSINESS PUBLISHING
20 Guest St, Suite 700 | Brighton, MA 02135
phone: 617 783 7587
Fax: 617 783 7556
hbr.org |
harvardbusiness.org | hbsp.harvard.edu
July 7, 2018

Hunter Taylor  
Doctor of Business Administration Candidate  
Liberty University

Dear Hunter Taylor:

After careful review of your research proposal entitled “Participative Management and Project Success,” the board of the Piedmont Triad Chapter of the PMI (Project Management Institute) has decided to grant you permission to survey our members.

Check the following boxes, as applicable:

☒ We will email the survey link directly to our members and send reminders

☒ We are requesting a copy of the results upon study completion and/or publication. Presentation before members not meeting to be scheduled.

Sincerely,  

[Signature]

Vice President, Programs  
PMI Piedmont Triad Chapter

[Logo]
HI Hunter! Carolinas AGC is happy to help you with your project. While we don't give out membership lists for the sake of privacy within our membership, I'm happy to add a brief paragraph about your project and a link to the survey in our weekly membership email. I'll run it for a few weeks as well if you'd like. If you want to send me a few sentences about what type of information you're hoping to garner from our members, along with the survey link, I'll get it in our next issue, which runs Wednesday, 10/17, and then the following week as well.

I hope you have a very successful project, and Congrats on getting such an incredible education at Liberty – my daughter is a high school senior at Gaston Christian School and has several friends who will be attending there next year.

Take care,

Lori McGovern
Director of Membership
Carolinas AGC
4824 Parkway Plaza Blvd., Suite 115, Charlotte, NC 28217
Phone: (704) 372-1459 (Dial 1 to reach extensions, then dial ext. 5227)
LMcGovern@CarolinasAGC.org  |  www.caagc.org
Stay Connected on Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn

Did you hear about our SOLD OUT 2018 SUMMIT & EXPO? It was great! see the video.
We’re taking on the skilled labor shortage head on through Build Your Career.
Appendix F: Liberty University Institutional Review Board Approval Notice

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

August 29, 2018

Hunter Stuart Taylor
IRB Exemption 3440.082918: Participative Leadership and Project Management

Dear Hunter Stuart Taylor,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under exemption category 46.101(b)(2), which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:101(b):

(2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless:
(i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and
(ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any changes to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by submitting a change in protocol form or a new application to the IRB and referencing the above IRB Exemption number.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible changes to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
The Graduate School

Liberty University | Training Champions for Christ since 1971
Appendix G: Informed Consent

CONSENT FORM
Participative Management and Project Success
Hunter S. Taylor
Liberty University
School of Business

You are invited to be in a research study on the influence of participative leadership style on project success. You were selected as a possible participant because you are either a project manager or a project team member who is 18 or older, work within the United States, and have worked on a team that has completed a project within the last 2 years. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Hunter S. Taylor, a doctoral candidate in the School of Business at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Background Information: The purpose of this study is to determine if a relationship exists between participative leadership and project success.

Procedures: If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:
1. Complete an anonymous online survey via SurveyMonkey about the leadership style used in the project and the success of the project. The survey will take approximately 8 minutes of your time. The researcher will not collect any personal information about you and will not know who provided the survey answers.

Risks: The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

Benefits: Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include developing an understanding of how participative leadership influences project success. This information can benefit project-based organizations in hiring and/or promotion decisions and in developing project management training programs.

Compensation: Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. Data will be stored on a password locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.

Voluntary Nature of the Study: Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or the Project Management Institute. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any
question or withdraw at any time prior to submitting the survey, without affecting those relationships.

How to Withdraw from the Study: If you choose to withdraw from the study, please exit the survey and close your internet browser. Your responses will not be recorded or included in the study.

Contacts and Questions: The researcher conducting this study is Hunter Taylor. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact him at hTaylor11@liberty.edu or (252) 578-6936. You may also contact the researcher’s faculty chair, Dr. Christopher McChesney, at csmcchesney@liberty.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information for your records.

Statement of Consent: By clicking “Take My Survey,” you confirm that you have read and understood the above information. You have asked questions and have received answers. You consent to participate in the study. Please print a copy of this page for your records.

If you select “I DO NOT agree to participate,” you can exit the survey and close your browser and no information will be recorded.