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# Employee Conduct When Administering Government Contracts in the Defense Logistics Agency

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College of Management and Technology

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Sandra Michaels

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Walden University
2015

Abstract


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Agency

by

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MS, American Intercontinental University, 2008

BS, Kaplan University, 2006




Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration



Walden University

August 2015

Abstract

The Office of the Inspector General in the Department of Justice reported cases of government contracting employees accepting bribes totaling over $540 million within a 6-year period. The purpose of this case study was to explore the perceptions of government contracting managers regarding the knowledge needed to mitigate employees' unethical behaviors when administering government contracts. Previous studies on government contracting employees' unethical behaviors focused on employees' behaviors, but lacked data concerning managers' roles in mitigating employees' unethical behaviors. The study's conceptual framework was stakeholder theory. The data were gathered through semistructured interviews conducted with 21 government contracting managers in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States and from company documents. Data from the semistructured interviews and company documents were analyzed, coded, and then grouped into categories using a modified content analysis technique. Key themes suggested that to mitigate government contracting employees' unethical behaviors, these government contracting managers required continued training. These managers also found trust to be vital to dissiminating ethical requirements to employees, and they also reported benefits to conducting ethical government contracting. Member checking of participants' responses strengthened credibility and trustworthiness of these interpretations. Findings and recommendations from this study may contribute to positive social change by improving training and ethical standards in government contracting, which could lead to enhancing societal trust in government contracting organizations.

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Dedication

To know what you know and what you do not know, that is true knowledge.

-   Confucius

First, foremost, and always, my thanks to GOD for giving me the strength, courage, and determination to make it through this challenging journey. Second, I dedicate the pursuit of this degree (and the many long hours and sleepless nights) to my daughter Phelicia, my son Eriq, my mother Mrs. Mahala Haynes, and to all my family and friends who have encouraged and supported me in this journey. I appreciate and value your love, faith, compassion, and support. I could not have accomplished such a monumental task by myself. Thank you for being my strength. Love, always.

Acknowledgments

Knowledge has to be improved, challenged, and increased constantly, or it vanishes.

-   Henry Ford

A special thank you goes to all participants in this study. I offer a special thank you to Dr. Timothy Malone and committee members for taking the time to review this study with critical and meticulous assessments. You've challenged me, tested me, and given me the tools needed to improve this study. Thank you for your insight, wisdom, intelligence, and determination to keep me on track. Your feedback was, is, and always will be invaluable.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

To act ethically or unethically is the question that government contracting employees face when administering government contracts. Government contracting employees must uphold the highest standards of ethical integrity since their job requires exercising judgment over public funds (U.S. Government Accountability Office [U.S. GAO], 2009). The Office of Personnel Management (OPM, 1983) maintained that government contracting employees may solicit, evaluate, negotiate, and award contracts to any contractor, vendor, or supplier authorized to do business with government contracting organizations. Federal contracting is an important component in the United States' success. Government contracting organizations are major participants in the acquisition of goods and services from public and private entities.

The Congress enacted statutes and regulations that guide government contracting policies and values. Schick (2011) suggested that recent increases in government spending contribute to unethical behaviors by government contracting employees. The Department of Justice (DOJ) entrusted financial resources to fighting occurrences of contracting fraud (DOJ, Financial Fraud Enforcement Task Force, 2010). Unfortunately, no consensus exists concerning why unethical behaviors by government contracting employees occur and how to prevent the unethical behaviors. Costantino, Dotoli, Falagario, and Sciancalepore (2012) posited that vaguely defined government contracting regulations do not require enough transparency in the contracting process. Government contracting organizations must define ethical standards when determining government contracting guidance (Nackman, Rathbone, Myers, & Pannier, 2011).

**Background of the Problem**

In the past decade, the occurrences of unethical behaviors by some government contracting employees administering government contracts have increased (Curry, 2010). From 2005 to 2009, the U.S. GAO (2009) reported an increase in unethical behavior by some government contracting employees when administering contracts. U.S. GAO (2009) assessed that from 2005 to 2009, there was a reduction in government contracting employees with knowledge of unethical behaviors such as a violation of conscience, failure to honor, and disregard of policy. For example, government contracting employees who take unauthorized gifts in exchange for unapproved contracts violate what the government contracting arena represents.

It is highly unethical, improper, and immoral for the government contracting employees to work outside the confines of the FAR regulations (Acquisition Central, 2014). As unethical behaviors by government contracting employees continue, researchers have attempted to understand what led to unethical behaviors. Curry (2010) and Mountain (2011) investigated unethical behaviors by government contracting employees when administering government contracts. Government contracting employees' unethical behaviors generated an impression of widespread ethical violations in government contracting organizations (Curry, 2010). In addition, the workplace culture might influence government contracting employees' unethical behavior (Mountain, 2011). Individuals have unique values that guide them; however, when doing government contracting business, ethical values must guide the individual.

**Problem Statement**

The extent of unethical behaviors by government contracting employees is detrimental to government contracting organizations because unethical behavior threatens the national defense and increases wasteful spending of taxpayer funds (Sikka & Lehman, 2015). The Office of the Inspector General (2013) reported cases of government contracting employees accepting bribes totaling more than $540 million within 6-year period. The general business problem was that the oversight by government contracting managers has not controlled or limited unethical behaviors by government contracting employees. The specific business problem was a lack of knowledge that government contracting managers have to mitigate unethical behaviors of government contracting employees who administer contracts.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to provide an understanding of the knowledge required by government contracting managers to mitigate unethical behaviors of government contracting employees when administering contracts. The research of Bao, Wang, Larsen, and Morgan (2013) formed the basis for this case study's research and understanding of the worth of management and leadership development in government contracting. I conducted semistructured interviews with 21 government contracting managers from the Defense Logistics Agency in the mid-Atlantic region who shared their insights about the strategies needed to mitigate government contracting employees' unethical behaviors when administering contracts. The completion of this study might affect business practice by helping government contracting managers learn strategies to

reduce contracting employees' unethical behaviors when administering contracts. Findings from this study may contribute to positive social change by improving training and ethical standards, which could lead to enhancing society's trust in government contracting organizations. In addition, benefits of this study may encourage socially accountable and transparent federal contracting processes that might reduce fraud.

## Nature of the Study

The inquiry used for this study was a qualitative case analysis. Qualitative researchers collect, analyze, and interpret data based on participants' characterization of real-world events (Koro-Ljungberg & Bussing, 2013). In contrast, quantitative researchers use statistical data and hypothesis to draw conclusions (Kozlowski, Chao, Grand, Braun, & Kuljanin, 2013). As a mixed-method approach combines both qualitative and quantitative data to reach conclusions, a mixed method approach did not suit this study. A mixed method approach required including statistical data from a quantitative study (Molina-Azorin, 2012). A primary aim of conducting this qualitative case study was to communicate an understanding of the individual's insights. The study allowed me to focus on a particular case, incorporate rich description of the circumstance, and provide heuristic by illuminating the reader's understanding of the phenomenon (Flotts & Diaz, 2012).

A qualitative researcher classifies the study based on the research design. Specific research designs designated for qualitative studies include case study, narrative, ethnography, grounded theory, and phenomenology (Tracy, 2013). The research question determines the appropriate research design (Koro-Ljungberg & Bussing, 2013). A single

case study design comprised the nature of this study. Although single case and multicase studies involve interviews, data management, and interpretations, a multicase approach did not fit this study. A multicase study involves researching a collection of embedded cases to find a suitable meaning (Stewart, 2012). According to Yin (2013), the case study method enables qualitative researchers to retain the holistic and significant characteristics of events such as individual life cycles. As a result, narrative, ethnography, grounded theory, and phenomenological designs did not suit this study.

Narrative researchers seek to understand the life of an individual for the purpose of relaying stories about the experiences of that individual (Suarez-Ortega, 2013). Using narrative research for this study would not have been appropriate because the focus for this study was on the understanding required by a group of midlevel managers in a specific organization. The unit of analysis in ethnography is a culture sharing group (Robinson, 2013); however, the goal for this study was not to study a culture sharing group. In grounded theory, the qualitative researcher attempts to develop a theory based on data from participants in the field (Hardman, 2013). Since grounded theory may be inductive in nature because it involves building a theory from the *bottom up* (Bendassolli, 2014), it was not suited for this study. With a phenomenology type study, the goal is to describe and show the merging and differing interrelations of a phenomenon on participants in a research study (Fisher & Stenner, 2011). The goal for this study was not to study several individuals commonly engaged in their experiences. Neither was there a plan to describe participants' personal experiences. The case study design provided a

means for me to focus on a single entity (Aslam, Georgiev, Mehta, & Kumar, 2012; Finlay, 2012).

## Research Question

A concise question was central to the research process. Arriving at a topic and question that had social significance was challenging. Gerring (2011) argued that there is no guide to creating a research question; each research question results in different outcomes. Likewise, Watkins (2012) maintained that creating quality research questions assists researchers in gaining and maintaining the interest of individuals. Therefore, in order to understand the knowledge required by individual managing government contracting employees administering contracts at a Defense Logistics Agency, I created this research study to answer one precise question: what knowledge do government contracting managers need to mitigate unethical behaviors of government contracting employees when administering contracts?

## Interview Questions

The research question served as the basis for creating the following semistructured interview questions (see Appendix A) to guide the interview process; however, I asked follow-up questions where appropriate.

1. What are the issues that you face as the manager of government contracting employees regarding unethical behaviors?

2. What are the fundamentals that you as a manager use to assist government contracting employees in understanding how to perform their duties ethically?

3. What are the elements of the organization's philosophy that you as a manager use to address government contracting employees' unethical behaviors when administering contracts?

4. What are the challenges confronting you as a manager in determining ethical implementation of the organization's philosophy?

5. What training and development methods do you use better guide employees to act ethically?

6. How can training and development methods be improved and incorporated as an integral part of government contract administration?

7. What benefits can result from employees' ethical administration of government contracts?

8. What further questions, comments, or information do you have that may be beneficial to this study?

**Conceptual Framework**

Stakeholder theory, advanced by Freeman (1984), formed the conceptual basis for this study. The concept of stakeholder theory should encourage business managers to consider the principles of organizational and public ethics when determining business compliance (Hasnas, 2013). Freeman (1984) devised concepts significant to stakeholder theory that integrate ethical notions into corporate strategies. The conceptual framework incorporated a review of the concepts associated with strategies that government contract managers need to reduce government contracting employees' unethical behaviors when administering contracts. The conceptual framework can align strategic theories with the

idea of ethical/unethical behaviors by government contracting employees when administering government contracts.

The literature review contains a discussion of stakeholder theory addressing three concepts. Regarding the first concept of the stakeholder theory, I discussed the shareholders' value and the association with business success. The second concept of the stakeholder theory consisted of threats to stakeholder values. The third concept of the stakeholder theory comprised strategies for bridging the gap to ensuring business success, moral integrity, corporate ethics, and positive social change. The stakeholder and the link to ethics and integrity affect (a) individuals' right to liberty, opportunity, and freedom, and (b) stakeholders' influence on governing principles that correlate with ethics. The embodiment of the organization and people over self is altruistic. Government contracting employees must consider their actions and the impact on society and the public trust. Resnik (2011) posited that organization leaders cite the need for public trust in promoting organizational values and code of ethics. Government contracting organizations can use stakeholder theory to administer government contracts in modern business practices.

**Definition of Terms**

The following terms and definitions appear throughout this study:

*Acquisition:* Acquisition procedures prescribed in relevant subsections of the FAR relate to the purchase of goods and services (Acquisition Central, 2014).

*Bribery:* Bribery is manipulating an action for personal gain by offering goods or services to an individual doing official government duties (U.S. Department of Labor [DOL], 2014a).

*Conflict of interest in government contracting:* Government contracting employee presents dissonance when he/she does not provide impartial service when administering a contract (Acquisition Central, 2014).

*Contract:* A contract is an agreement that specifies business transactions between qualified private organizations and the government (Small Business Administration [SBA], 2014).

*Contracting ethics:* Ethics is the continuation of the integrity of government contracting and assuring fair treatment to all approved government suppliers/contractors when administering government contracts (Acquisition Central, 2014).

*Core competency:* Core competency provides that an organization excels in a specified area of business and contributes sustainability to maintain a competitive advantage (Yang & VanLandingham, 2012).

*Corporate governance:* Corporate governances are rules and regulations that regulate the rights and responsibilities of stakeholders by controlling all aspects of the organization (Usunier, Furrer, & Furrer-Perrinjaquet, 2011).

*Defense competition:* Competition is the ability of an organization to improve performance while reducing cost (Wydler, Chang, & Schultz, 2013).

*Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR):* The FAR outlines procurement policies and procedures used in government contracting (Acquisition Central, 2014).

*Federal government outsourcing:* Government contracting organizations outsource services previously performed by government agencies to private companies for the purpose of efficiency, cost cutting, politics, and competition (SBA, 2014).

*Government contracting:* Government contracting requires government contracting organizations to obtain goods and services from private companies (General Services Administration [GSA], 2005). GSA (2005) assessed that government contracting includes identification of goods and service, source selection, contract award, and contract administration.

*Government contracting employee:* Government contracting employees are business leaders working for the benefit of government entities, customers, and community (OPM, 1983). The FAR authorizes government contracting employees to enter into, administer, or terminate contracts (Acquisition Central, 2014).

*Gratuity:* Gratuity is acceptance of gifts, favors, entertainment, loans, or anything of monetary value in exchange for favors from contracts (Acquisition Central, 2014). Subpart 3.1 of the FAR clarifies standards of conduct, policies, and procedures for avoiding personal conflicts of interest (Acquisition Central, 2014).

*Opportunism:* Opportunism is pursuing a person's self-interest by way of deceit and betrayal (Maser & Thompson, 2013).

*Trust:* Trust is the desire to take a chance to the extent of having clear objectives and assurance in the words and actions of others (Trapp, 2011).

**Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations**

Qualitative research comprises a variety of techniques, ideas, methods, themes, limitations, and assumptions (Jovanovic, 2011). A qualitative researcher should be aware or his or her assumptions in order to mitigate bias (Hibbert, Sillince, Diefenbach, & Cunliffe, 2014). This section lists the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations of this study.

**Assumptions**

My assumptions for this study included the following: (a) deficiencies existed regarding government contracting employees administering government contracts at the chosen establishment; (b) I understood and clearly presented the responses made by participants; (c) participants described their personal lived experiences of the phenomena studied. I used a qualitative single case study to understand the lived experiences of participants regarding what government contracting managers need to mitigate unethical behaviors by government contracting employees while doing their jobs.

**Limitations**

The first limitation was that focus on a single case study of one organization might limit generalization of the study to every government contracting organizations. The second limitation was regarding participants' knowledge of government contracting. Although participants were be in Pay Grades GS-11 to GS-13, there was no way to learn how acquainted the participants were with the subject matter. OPM (1983) required participants to receive specified training; however, each person's views of the

information may have been different. The final limitation regarded concern for a lack of individuals willing to participate in this study.

**Delimitations**

An optimal sampling would consist of government contracting employees from all government contracting organizations. Government contracting employees in Pay Grades GS-11 to GS-13 working at the Defense Logistics Agency in the mid-Atlantic area comprised this study. This delimitation was necessary as the focus of this study was in determining management knowledge needed to reduce contracting employees' unethical behaviors when administering contracts. For applied reasons, interviewing the entire government contracting population fell outside the scope of this study. Cleary, Horsfall, and Hayter (2014) posited that 20 individuals might represent an appropriate sample size in qualitative studies. Although Walden University requires a minimum of 20 interviews, I continued to interview individuals until the process reached saturation. Twenty-one individuals participated in the study.

**Significance of the Study**

The intent of this study was to consider participants' insights regarding management knowledge needed to reduce unethical behaviors by government contracting employees when administering contracts. Schick (2011) focused on increased government spending as the basis for government contracting employees' unethical behaviors. Curry (2010) concentrated on ethical principles and the impact of government contracting employees' unethical conducts when administering contracts. Both Curry (2010) and Schick (2011) focused on different causes for the unethical behaviors;

however, the results of government contracting employees' unethical conducts when administering contracts interconnected.

**Contribution to Business Practice**

The result of this qualitative case study might help the government contracting managers in developing strategies to reduce government contracting employees' unethical behaviors when administering contracts. An essential problem is an increase in unethical behaviors by government contracting employees when administering contracts at the Defense Logistics Agency. Additionally, the U.S. GAO (2009) noted a decrease in employees willing to reveal unethical behaviors.

**Implications for Social Change**

The results of this research study may have a positive effect on the issue of ethics when administering government contracts and provide a standard for government contracting managers to determine ethical guidelines, procedures, and training for government contracting employees. Positive social change in government contracting is possible. Change becomes possible when society, policy makers, acquisitions, and contracting workforces understand transparency in the government contracting process (Stanger, 2012). This study may contribute to social change by producing ideas that could reverse financial losses that occur through government contracting employees' unethical behaviors. Government contracting managers' understanding of how to reduce government contracting employees' unethical behave may reduce future occurrences. Benefits of this study may encourage socially accountable and transparent federal contracting processes that might reduce fraud. Findings and recommendations from this

study may contribute to positive social change by improving training and ethical standards, which could lead to enhancing society's trust in government contracting organizations.

### A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

A literature review provides the basis for research and gives conditions for the development of the research question (Dunne, 2011). Wiles, Crow, and Pain (2011) used a literature review to explore aspects of the research question. Shuck (2011) indicated that a researcher creates new knowledge from the literature review. Gubernick (2013) used a literature review to assess determinants of team success and the impact on quality improvement in health care. Lopatto and Pelegano (2013) used a literature review to measure how rating scales affected patient-reported outcomes. Banerjee and Morley (2013) posited that knowledge produced in academia is based on legitimacy shown through professional literature and peer-reviewed publications. Examination of the literature will follow with a thematic analysis based on the research question.

The main resources for the literature review were journals and peer-reviewed articles available through the Walden University library. The following databases provided content for the literature review: Sage Premier, Business Source Complete, ScienceDirect, Academic Search Complete, and Thoreau. Content searches consisted of keywords (*acquisition, competence, conflict of interest, contracting, corporate governance, ethics, government contracting, outsourcing, procurement, qualitative research,* and *trust)* as noted in the definition of terms. Results of the searches yielded more than 400 articles for review. However, the articles actually incorporated in the

literature review totaled 288 references. Two hundred sixty-three references are dated 2011 to 2015. There are 258 total peer-reviewed references of which 248 were published within the last 5 years. Ninety-six percent of peer-reviewed references are from sources within the last 5 years. I included references prior to 2011 for historical purposes. The focus of the articles covered business ethics, government contracting, and government contracting compliance and regulations.

**Reflecting on Business Ethics in Relation to Government Contracting**

Unethical occurrences may adversely affect public administration organizations (Beeri, Dayan, & Vigoda-Gadot, 2013). When determining the most ethical contracting decision when administering government contracts, government contracting employees may encounter duplicity. Making the best assessment may be a matter of personal choice or business decision (Bergman, Rentsch, Small, Davenport, & Bergman, 2012). If there are legal or regulatory statutes involved, the decision is not always clear. When a government contracting employee makes an ethical decision contrary to government contracting guidelines, the employee may receive punitive action. As assessed by Cribb (2011), the moral burden of negotiating pressures between normal expectations and personal beliefs is daunting. As such, government contracting employees' ethical decisions when administering government contracts may involve conflicting issues of determining what is morally right. When considering business ethics, organizations can ensure that ethical judgments constitute a regard for history (Greaney et al., 2012). Historical, ethical business decisions have changed the dynamics and structure of information in business ethics (Fyke & Buzzanell, 2013). Although the government

contracting employees may encounter unethical instances when administering government contracts, following the government contracting guidelines may assist government contracting employees to make ethical decisions.

There should be no ethical boundaries in government contracting business; ethics should be the principal factor considered. If government contracting organizations do not impose regulations and guidelines on their employees, government contracting employees might make ethical decisions based on their judgment (Halpern & Snider, 2012). The intrinsic nature of some human beings to be unethical makes government contracting employees' unethical behaviors disturbing. Government contracting employees may believe that if they are not caught being unethical, they are not guilty of unethical actions when administering government contracts. If the government contracting employees continue to act dishonestly when administering government contracts, the behaviors may continue to influence society's attitudes towards government contracting organizations (Curry, 2010).

The government procurement system underwent a major overhaul in the late 1980s (Cox, 2011). In 1988, Operation I11-wind detailed extensive unethical exchanges between government contracting employees and suppliers (Cox, 2011). Although the Congress enacted additional regulations to prevent similar unethical exchanges when administering government contracts, government contracting employees continue to behave dishonestly. Government contracting is a strategic tool to bring diverse groups and cultures together, but ethics is essential to the development of government contracting. Ethics in government contracting can be as simple as doing what is right.

It is not useful for any employee to give unfair advantages to an unauthorized supplier/vendor when determining who receives government contracts (Clark, 2011). Understanding the role of private companies in government contracting may be beneficial to understanding how ethics affects government contracting policy. During the past few decades, government contracting has become more prevalent (Jiahuan, 2013). Different sectors of society including the political arena have affected government contracting business.

Persons who affect political change should understand how those changes affect individuals and society. Political proponents have influenced government contracting policy (Bromberg, 2014). Due to their connections with particular political parties, private companies may receive a government contract award (Jiahuan, 2013). A politicization of the government contracting process resulted from military wasteful spending while outsourcing to private companies in Pakistan (Zaidi, Mayhew, Cleland, & Green, 2012). Since government contracting organizations use private companies to do government contracting business, ethical guidelines are necessary (Bumgarner & Newswander, 2012). Ethical expectations exist regarding competency in government contracting with due regard for public values (Bumgarner & Newswander, 2012). Since political influence can affect the execution of organizational regulations, organizations should move towards further oversight regarding political influence in government contracting (Bromberg, 2014). Acceptable oversight should hold the contractor accountable for ethically fulfilling terms of the government contract; inadequate oversight may lead to unfulfilled contract terms. Although politics may affect the

administration of government contracts, positive ethical attitudes regarding government contracting might demonstration a balance between government contracting organizations' values and society's expectations. Government contracting organizations and employees may need further reforms; as such, the process of accountability while administering government contracts became stringent after 2008 (Jiahuan, 2013).

In government contracting, both the government contracting employees and the suppliers have rights and obligations to conduct government contracting business ethically. Corporate executives, suppliers, vendors, as well as the government contracting employees should exercise restraint and be morally responsible when doing government contracting business (Lohier, 2011). Payton and Kennedy (2013) argued that government contracting requires transparency, equity, and ethics. Government contracting organizations should improve their ethical climate (Singh, 2011). Gonzalez-Hermosillo and Hesse (2011) posited that an organization's economic climate is dependent on current financial market trends. Sudden changes in financial market conditions may produce financial crises (Gonzalez-Hermosillo & Hesse, 2011).

In 2008, the United States experienced one of the worst economic crises in recent history (Tozzo, 2013). Although, the 2008 financial crisis appeared minor on a global scale, the instability of the financial market affected most U.S. companies (Tozzo, 2013). The FAR outlined requirements regarding private entities desiring to do business with government contracting organizations (Acquisition Central, 2014).

The words *contractor*, *supplier*, and *vendor* are interchangeable throughout this study. As stated in FAR Part 9, Subpart 9.1, an authorized contractor, vendor, or supplier

must have sufficient financial resources to perform the tasks as required in government contracting (Acquisition Central, 2014). The contractor or supplier must have a satisfactory performance record, a satisfactory record of integrity, and business ethics (Acquisition Central, 2014). All authorized suppliers/vendors must have equal opportunities to compete for government contracts (GSA, 2005).

Business ethics can change based on society's perceptions of fairness, justice, and impartiality (Tota & Shehu, 2012). Ethical values in business are in constant transition (Tota & Shehu, 2012). Due to reports of extensive corporate scandals, society has lost faith in business integrity (Baker & Comer, 2012). Tota and Shehu (2012) noted that society's views change more quickly than changes can occur in an organization. Society is skeptical of organizations and their employees behaving ethically (Baker & Comer, 2012).

Leonidou, Kvasova, Leonidou, and Chari (2013) assessed that perceived unethical behavior can diminish consumer/society's trust. The ethical reputation of the organization and its members enhances consumer/society's trust (Leonidou et al., 2013). Robertson, Blevins, and Duffy (2013) posited that business ethics is at the forefront of organizational strategy and corporate governance. Business ethics leads to positive corporate governance and helps an organization's competitive advantage (Robertson et al., 2013). Unethical factors can affect an employee, whether doing business with a private company or government contracting entity. Knowing the organization's ethical requirements may help the employee to do his or her job.

Business ethics arise from the needs of different stakeholders to provide standards by which to evaluate the ethicality of the organization (Rhodes & Wray-Bliss, 2013). Stakeholders' trust in an organization is not automatic; the need to provide organizational ethics becomes apparent when stakeholders have input into the construct of organizational values (Mihai & Alina, 2013). Mihai and Alina (2013) posited that stakeholders who demonstrate too much faith in the organization become vulnerable. Brown (2013) posited that stakeholders place trust in one person or group, therefore, leaving themselves vulnerable to ethical violations. Unethical behaviors in business can affect government contracting stakeholders.

**Stakeholder Theory**

Although stakeholder theory is crucial to understanding different aspects of organizations, limited knowledge exists regarding the value of stakeholder theory and its measurement (Harrison & Wicks, 2013). In this study, stakeholder theory highlighted the relationships among ethics, shareholders, and government contracting. Lorne and Dilling (2012) posited that difficulties can exist between the concept of shareholder value and stakeholder value. Hayibor (2012) noted that stakeholders might preserve their interest by acting against the company. The atmosphere of government contracting is conducive to instance of unethical behaviors when administering government contracts (Costantino et al., 2012). From 2000 through 2009, Schick (2011) noted increases in government contracting spending. Vague government contracting regulations reduce transparency in the government contracting process (Costantino et al., 2012).

Organizations may deter fraud through personal and organizational regulations (Richman & Richman, 2011). Government contracting organizations may discourage unethical behaviors through ensuring ethical compliance with government contracting regulations. Ethical compliance within government contracting must focus on the broader area of stakeholder management and social responsibility (Ayuso, Rodriguez, Garcia-Castro, & Arino, 2012). Government contracting employees may have their agendas; however, compliance with government contracting policies may be useful to the employees' ethical performance.

Proponents of stakeholder theory encourage associating moralities of corporate and social ethics with corporate ethical compliance (Renouard, 2011). Renouard (2011) indicated that Freeman's stakeholder theory allow formation of philosophies to guide an organization's ethics. Freeman's theory provides stakeholders with alternative viewpoints to explore the link with ethics and business (Kaufman & Englander, 2011). Fulmer and Gelfand (2012) considered trust in companies and the impact on stakeholders or society. Bansal and DesJardine (2014) posited corporate social responsibility affect stakeholders. Corporate social responsibility incorporates ethics and morality within an organization (Bansal & DesJardine, 2014). To maintain society's trust, organizations can develop standards and morality with all stakeholders (Shadnam, 2014). Organizational ethics is a matter of compliance with applicable laws (Segal, 2012).

Opponents of stakeholder theory assessed that managers use the benefits of stakeholder theory to influence resources for the benefit of the organization (Eskerod & Huemann, 2013). Eskerod and Huemann (2013) posited that stakeholder theory is

manipulative and deficient in ethical approaches to stakeholders and is therefore

considered unimportant to the organization. Armenakis, Brown, and Mehta (2011)

posited that ethical obligations comprise an organization's social change. Society

criticizes and abhors organizations that cannot demonstrate positive influences

(Armenakis et al., 2011).

Government contracting employees tasked with upholding public interests must

offer to society and all stakeholders both honesty and trustworthiness (Amirkhanyan,

Kim, & Lambright, 2012). Stakeholder value should resonate throughout the

organization. The stakeholder theory consists of the ethical and managerial branches.

Although both branches focus on preservation of the organization, the ethical branch

considers all stakeholders while the managerial branch emphasizes power (Deegan,

2007). An organization's alignment and the stakeholders' strategies may affect society's

trust. Organizational success might consist of ethics and moral characteristics of all

stakeholders (Ayuso et al., 2012). It is not enough to think internally; stakeholder strategy

must think globally (Ni, Qian, & Crilly, 2014).

Companies might encourage their employees to fulfill their responsibilities to

society (Ni et al., 2014). Maintaining the stakeholder and the public's trust is vital to an

organization's success. Companies can deliberate the stakeholder's needs when

considering organizational responsibilities (Yang, 2012). Aligning accountability in

contracting relationships might help in keeping the public trust (Witesman & Fernandez,

2013). Businesses can plan ethics and transparency guidelines to assist employees in

enforcing business and community values when safeguarding the public trust (Keeler,

2013). Deontological ethics safeguard organizational veracity by cautioning individuals to avoid transgressions that violate the public trust (Adams & Balfour, 2010). Society looks to public sector employees to act ethically and trustworthily (Svara, 2014). Government contracting employees must strive to ensure compliance with organizational values and applicable laws. In order to have a clear understanding of what ensures fairness and impartiality when administering government contracts, organizations develop detailed requirements and guidelines to assist employees in doing their jobs.

**Corporate Governance**

The government contracting arena established principles to assist government contracting employees to fulfill their duties for the benefit of the stakeholders. In response to the collapse of WORLDCOM, ENRON, and other large corporations, Congress enacted the Sarbanes-Oxley Act (SOX) of 2002. SOX protects stakeholders from fraudulent practices in the business industry (Hossain, Mitra, Rezaee, & Sarath, 2011). Corporate governance emerged from collaboration between investors, managers, and employees (O'Kelly &Wheeler, 2012). Collaboration ensured respect and appreciation of each stakeholder's contribution (O'Kelly &Wheeler, 2012). In the focus on corporate governance, each member is responsible for ensuring that ethical standards are a focal point of the collaboration (Bota-Avram, 2013).

The organization should establish a strategic foundation to be successful; the strategic framework embodies values, policies, and goals (Lai Fong, Azizan, & Samad, 2011). Corporate governance reflects the company's efforts to address legitimate responsibilities, therefore building a foundation of ethical business processes (Gupta,

2012). Unfortunately, high-profile corporate scandals have revealed unethical corporate governance (Cragg & Matten, 2011). As with other corporate scandals, media reports have exposed wrongdoing in some government contracting organizations (Curry, 2010). Businesses exist to create corporate value, but some organizations may not fully understand the association between organizational and stakeholder values (Koenig, 2012). Sound corporate governance enhances the company's reputation (Iwu-Egwuonwu, 2011). Society observes the sustainability of an organization's corporate governance through the actions of stakeholders (Jin & Yeo, 2011). Corporate governance in government contracting depends on the balance of organizational principles, stakeholder's values, and government contracting employees' enforcement of the government contracting organization's ethical agenda.

Organizations must focus on ensuring that the company meets expectations of the customer and support stakeholders' needs (Koenig, 2012). Each venue requires ethical corporate governance (Scherer, Baumann-Pauly, & Schneider, 2013). Corporate governance and ethical values have significant effects on stakeholder and employees' perceptions of the organization (Schumacher & Wasieleski, 2013). Social and environmental responsibilities necessitate compliance with ethical corporate governance codes (Ayuso et al., 2012).

To understand the impact that varying values have on corporate governance, Azim (2012) looked at the impact of organizational structures, employees' principles, and society's expectations of corporate governance. Complementary views between stakeholders are useful to corporate governance (Azim, 2012). Government contracting

employees follow rules and guidelines to ensure that organizations and employees maintain effective corporate governance (Adams & Balfour, 2010). Although political influences may affect organizational regulations, corporate governance factors may be difficult to assess since each company's variables are self-determined. Government contracting organizations use corporate governance to set the organization's objectives and specify the rules and regulations used to monitor the policies, actions, and decisions of the organizations.

**Government Contracting**

An enhanced understanding of government contracting provides insight for this qualitative case study. In order for the government contracting process to function, authority to acquire goods and services must exist. Government contracting involves purchasing goods and services from sources outside of the company (GSA, 2005). Government procurement of goods and services benefits everyone without exception, meaning that each stakeholder benefits individually (Rufin & Rivera-Santos, 2012). Government contracting employees use contracts to purchase goods and services. The FAR contains guidelines for government contract administration as well as ethical codes of conduct for employees responsible for contract administration (Acquisition Central, 2014). The terms *contracting out* and *outsourcing* are used interchangeably throughout this study. Understanding the standard competition process when administering government contracts provides guidelines in the government contracting organization's interaction with private suppliers.
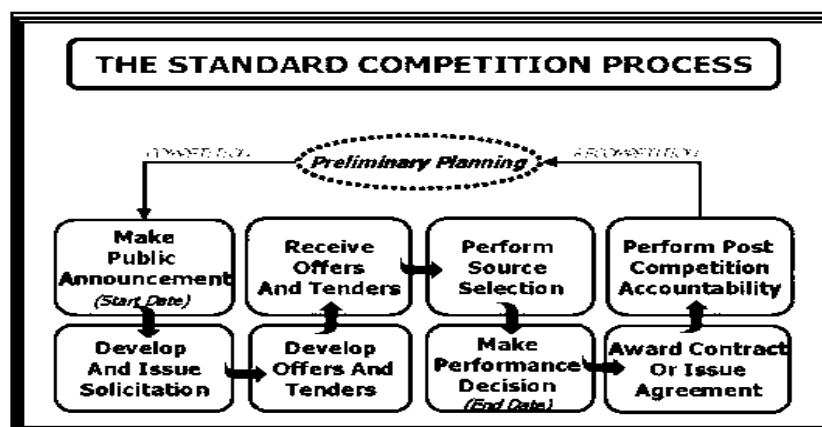
Figure B2.

*Figure 1*. An example of the standard government contracting competition process. Reprinted from Office of Management and Budget: Circular NO. A-76 revised. Retrieved March 9, 2014, from https://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/circulars_a076_a76_incl_tech_correction/.

Government contracting organizations must be open to competition. To execute a standard government contracting competition process, employees must make public announcements giving suppliers opportunities to compete for government contracts (Acquisition Central, 2014). Figure 1 displays the standard competition process as outlined by the FAR. Competition offers private companies opportunities to compete in a public sphere for government contracts (Ohemeng & Grant, 2014). FAR Part 15 established requirements regarding supplier choice for government contracts (Acquisition Central, 2014). Selecting a reputable contractor is necessary for contract management success (Bradshaw & Chang, 2013). Government contracting employees can consider a supplier's past performance and reputation to determine if the supplier's actions may adversely affect the outcome of the contract (Acquisition Central, 2014).

In 1994, Congress passed the Federal Acquisition Streamlining Act authorizing government contracting organizations to consider a supplier's past performance when evaluating determination of future contract actions (U.S. Department of Labor [DOL], 2014b). Ignorance concerning vendors' past performance contributed to high risk in contracting (Bradshaw & Chang, 2013). Without adequate contractor past performance information, government contracting organizations risk duplicating contract failures (Bradshaw & Chang, 2013). FAR Part 15 directs government contracting employees to ensure that government contracts are competitive. Government contracting employees must deliberate a contractor's past acts when deciding if the supplier is eligible for a government contract. Knowing how to manage a government contract may offer each government contracting employee appropriate guidelines to work within the confines of stringent government contracting regulations.

Employees who understand the requirements of government contract management may do their job effectively. Contract management promulgates relationships between each government contracting organization, government contracting employees, and suppliers (SBA, 2014). Government contracting organizations might demonstrate consistency when assessing a supplier's eligibility for a government contract (Bradshaw & Chang, 2013). Suppliers may help government contracting employees with processes of contract administration provided the actions do not alter or affect other suppliers (Acquisition Central, 2014). Government contracting organizations might develop an understanding towards appropriate economic, social, democratic, and legal considerations

as highlighted by organizational requirements and civil law (Yang & VanLandingham, 2012).

The use of private suppliers to execute government contracts has increased in the past decade (Schick, 2011). Government outsourcing affords private sector companies opportunities to provide goods and services to government organizations (U.S. Office of Management and Budget [OMB], 2003). Government contracting organizations posited that outsourcing to private companies provides cost savings in the delivery of services (Kidalov & Snider, 2011). The government contract is an agreement that stipulates business communications between qualified private companies and the government (SBA, 2014).

Since its foundation in 1953, the SBA has advocated small companies in the United States (SBA, 2014). Small businesses are vital to the economy since they can provide stability in economically distressed areas (Servon, Fairlie, Rastello, & Seely, 2010). Due to small businesses' value to the economy, the SBA initiated policies and programs to maximize small business development (Servon et al., 2010). Due to recent financial crises, the government established public policies to support small business concerns (Dennis, 2011). Due to the creative and innovative nature of small businesses, economic recovery in the United States may occur (Monahan, Shah, & Mattare, 2011).

*Table 1*

Summary of 2008 and 2009 Small Business Procurement Scores at the SBA

|  | 2008 Achievement | 2009 Goal | 2009 Achievement |
|---|---|---|---|
| Small business | 21.50 | 23.00 | 21.89 |
| Women-owned small business | 3.39 | 5.00 | 3.68 |
| Small Disadvantaged Business | 6.76 | 5.00 | 7.57 |
| Service-disabled veteran-owned small Business | 1.49 | 3.00 | 1.98 |
| HUBZone | 2.34 | 3.00 | 2.81 |

*Note*. The above data refer to information retrieved from http://www.sba.gov.

The SBA's socioeconomic program monitors the following concerns: service-disabled veteran-owned, small disadvantaged, women-owned, HUBZone, and 8(a) business development programs (SBA, 2014). The SBA established a list of small business size requirements to assist companies in determining their small business status (Acquisition Central, 2014). Under Title 13, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 121, the SBA assessed the standards for small companies doing business with the federal government (Government Printing Office [GPO], 2011). The SBA tracks small business procurement status annually. As noted in Table 1, the SBA surpassed their 2008 achievements; however, in three of five socioeconomic groups, the SBA's achievements did not meet 2009 set goals (SBA, 2014).

Some organizations may struggle to find their place in the realm of the small business zone. Minority owned companies might at times struggle to connect with

government organizations (Ram, Woldesenbet, & Jones, 2011). To equalize small business growth in government contracting, the federal government created the Small-Disadvantage Business (SDB) certification program and the Section 8(a) program (as cited by Smith & Fernandez, 2010). These two programs allow minority-owned small businesses to obtain government contracts.

In 2008, the SBA began enforcement of policies governing Small-Disadvantaged businesses (SBA, 2014). To qualify as a Small-Disadvantaged business, socially or economically disadvantaged individual must 51% or more retain the business (SBA, 2014). Under the Section 8(a) program, the government contracting agency can distinguish contracts for certified Small-Disadvantaged companies (Smith & Fernandez, 2010). The SBA (2014) provided eight eligibility requirements for Section 8(a) program eligibility including American citizenship, 51% or above minority-owned and displayed an expectation for success.

The federal government developed Microenterprise Development programs (MED) to capitalize on the entrepreneurship of Small-Disadvantaged businesses (Monahan et al., 2011). The majority of MED businesses are women and minority owned businesses (Monahan et al., 2011). Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 governed minority-owned businesses. Under Title VII, minority-owned businesses might make a disparate-impact civil rights lawsuit if a business practice adversely affects the minority business (Biddle & Biddle, 2013). Small businesses offer ethnically diverse organizations competitive advantage (Smallbone, Kitching, & Athayde, 2010). Ethnically diverse

organizations may increase competition in the small business arena (Smallbone et al., 2010).

Competition in minority owned small businesses enables organizations to segment their strategies to reduce costs and increase profits (Collins, 2011). Small businesses are imperative to the United States economic growth. As such, the SBA created programs to give particular groups economic advantages. The Microenterprise Development programs allowed qualified companies to compete as Small-Disadvantaged business. As with all other government contracting regulations, the legislative branch of the United States government determined a need to update the requirements for small business concerns.

In 2007, the U.S. Supreme Court updated the rules as applied to Title VII. Based on the court's ruling, Title VII incorporated equal employment practices related to discrimination (Bradbury, 2011). The SBA influences the moral attitude of government contracting regarding socio-economic businesses by offering ethical recommendations to government contracting employees and supplier (SBA, 2014). FAR Part 19 includes regulations related to government contracting organizations working with small businesses (Acquisition Central, 2014). To help small businesses in understanding and/or registering to do business with government contracting organizations, the SBA provided systems and guidelines. The FAR – Federal Acquisition Regulations; SAM –System for Award Management; FPDS – Federal Procurement Data Systems; GSAM – General Service Administration Manual; and ESRS – Electronic Subcontracting Reporting

System. For a small business to obtain a government contract, a small business must ensure it is competitively ready in a global marketplace.

Competition is a basis for government contracting (Wydler et al., 2013); however, competition for government contracts is uncertain (Johnston & Girth, 2012). Government contracting employees anticipated that suppliers would provide services as specified in the contract (Keeler, 2013). Therefore, government contracting employees must ensure there is clarity in each contract (Kidalov & Snider, 2011). If provisions of the contract are ambiguous, suppliers may apply their interpretation to the contract. Therefore, transparency in contracting is important in assuring that contractors perform the contract requirements as specified (Keeler, 2013).

Government contracting employees must offer clearly defined protocols that establish criteria for a contract (Yang & VanLandingham, 2012). The SBA provided guidance to assist small businesses desiring to do business with government organizations. FAR Part 19 outlines to each government contracting employee precise rules and regulations associated with doing government contracting business with small companies. Although the FAR provides guidelines for doing business with a government contracting organization, a concern noted is a lack of adherence to the government contracting guidelines by contractors and government contracting employees.

As with all business ventures, government contracting employees may encounter apprehensions and misgivings while administering government contracts. A recurring concern regarding contracting out of government services is the integration of contractor priorities with the responsibilities of contract administration (Keeler, 2013). Opportunism

may occur in the form of unethical conduct (Maser & Thompson, 2013). Government contracting employees can monitor a supplier's implementation of the contracting requirements (Kidalov & Snider, 2011); suppliers may occasionally receive government contracting funds but provide lackluster service (Yang & VanLandingham, 2012).

Another issue regarding contracting out of government services is a lack of oversight (Lamothe & Lamothe, 2013). Government contracting employees must develop strategies when offering government contracts to private suppliers. To ensure that suppliers provide the goods or service as outlined in the contract, it is important that government contracting employees and suppliers know the requirements of the contract. The lack of accountability and transparencies of government outsourcing services may require reforms to the current guidelines regarding the implementation of contracted services (Costantino et al., 2012). A problem may exist in defining core competencies in government contracting; political and ideological factors may affect core competency decisions (Yang and VanLandingham, 2012).

Government contracting organizations must ensure that government contracting employees have the tools needed to complete contracting functions (Sebastian & Davison, 2011). When inadequate core competencies exist, there may be a rise in customer complaints. Knowing steps to deal with a customer's complaints may ensure that the government contract requirements are satisfied. Customers should make complaints regarding unfulfilled features of the contract to the government contracting organization and not directly to the vendor (Keeler, 2013). Customer service and customer satisfaction encompass the administration of government contracts (SBA,

2014). Ensuring customer satisfaction with all aspects of the contract must be a priority for both the supplier and government contracting employee (SBA, 2014). Customers who are unsatisfied with the scope of the contract may submit complaints to supervising authorities (Keeler, 2013). A customer's complaints of ethical violations of the agreement might introduce liquidated damages against the supplier.

Ethical violations found when administering government service contracts contain prohibited solicitation or acceptance of gratuities. Government organizations required ethics when outsourcing government contracts since society expects government contracting employees to serve the public trust by ensuring that only approved suppliers receive government contracts (Schick, 2011). Political and economic factors may affect government contracting out; however, government contracting employees may use standard laws to enforce ethical management of contracts (Yang & VanLandingham, 2012). Transparency is necessary during the contracting process (Maser & Thompson, 2013). Whatever factors influence government contract administration, ensuring that government contracting employees provide suppliers with clearly written contracts is necessary and proper.

Congress retains required and proper authority over the government contracting regulations. Under Article I, Section 8, Clause 18 of the Unites States Constitution, Congress can delegate powers to the Executive Branch of the federal government (OMB, 2003). Congressional delegation of authority can change contract management; each branch of the government connects to the other, sometimes making the lines between politics, and public administration blurred (Rosenbloom, 2013). The Executive Branch of

the U.S. government established laws central to government contracting organizations

and entities (Acquisition Central, 2014). The laws enacted by the Congress summarized

processes for competitiveness in government contracting.

Competitive sourcing permits public/private companies to do business with the

federal government organizations (Johnston & Girth, 2012). The relationship among

public/private businesses and government entities is essential to public service

contracting (Witesman & Fernandez, 2013). Competition in government contracting

authorizes public/private companies to compete and supply of goods and services while

affording government organizations opportunities to reduce spending (Lamothe &

Lamothe, 2012). Lamothe and Lamothe (2012) assessed that competition provides

incentives to companies to provide the best products and service to the government.

Figure 2 indicates the degree of annual government spending on contracts from 2005

through 2009. As noted in Figure 2, annual government contract spending steadily

increased from 2005 through 2009.

DLA is an entity of the Department of Defense (DoD) and as such, DLA's budget

falls within the parameters of this table. DoD spent billions of dollars each year. Based on

information listed in Figure 2, government contracting employees exercised control over

billions of dollars to administer government contracts. Government contracting spending

increase provided opportunities for government employees to do unethical business when

administering contracts. The value of a government contract may determine the amount

of spending on that contract. The greater the value of the contract, the more profit a

supplier may receive. There can be prerequisites that guide government contracting

employees when administering a large monetary value contract such as an operational

contract.

## Annual Spending on Contracts ($B)
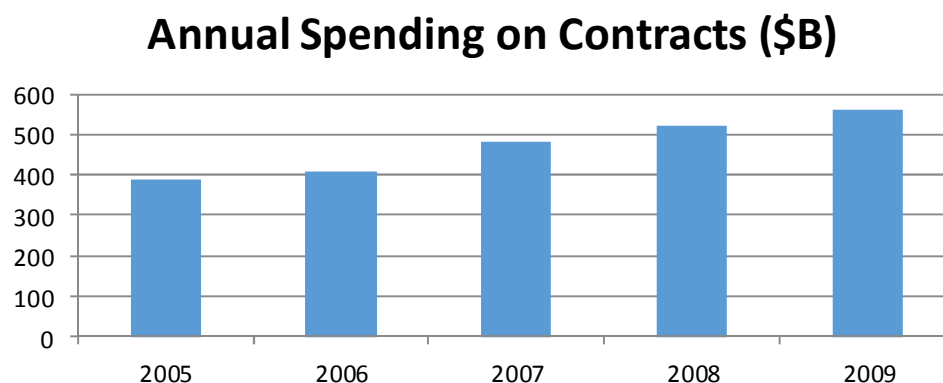


*Figure 2*. Summary of the U.S. Department of Defense annual contract spending from 2005 through 2009. The above information was retrieved from http://csis.org/files/publication/120524_DIIG_Defense_Service_Contract_Trends.pdf.

Members of various branches of the United States military often embark on joint

operations globally. As such, these operational units need emergency funds to purchase

goods and services contingent upon mission essentiality. Threats to the national security

of the United States' afforded the Congress the opportunity to establish guidelines for

issuing operational contracts (Acquisition Central, 2014). Under a joint capabilities

determination, government contracting organizations use operational contracts to provide

goods, services, and support to joint forces of the United States during contingencies

(Acquisition Central, 2014).

Due to the spending that may occur when administering an operational contract,

Johnston and Girth (2012) assessed the prerequisites of operational government contracts

by attempting to explain why competition was not the norm with some government

contracts. Lamothe and Lamothe (2012) maintained that competition must be a prerequisite to satisfactory contract performance. Competition drove value and efficiency in government contracting (Johnston & Girth, 2012). Efficiency analyzes the use of resources during a process (Gardenal, 2013). The FAR instructed that all government contracting employees seek out competition prior to issuing government contracts (Cohn, 2011). Knowing the status of a global marketplace may offer suppliers competitive advantages.

Organizations realize that using websites for market research when conducting business to government transactions is advantageous (Kotler, 2011). The proliferation of the internet with the ability to identify companies electronically surpassed traditional exchanges (Kotler, 2011). Market research when administering government contracts offer government contracting employees a suitable acquisition method of finding relevant suppliers (SBA, 2014). Market research supports government contracting efforts by providing government contracting employees with the ability to identify and utilize hard to find information business customers and their buying behaviors (SBA, 2014).

The use of the internet to conduct market research in government contracting organizations may create a feeling of efficiency (SBA, 2014). Web sites of professional companies qualified to conduct business with government contracting organizations vary significantly. Market research began with an emphasis on finding qualified suppliers to meet government contracting organizations' demand for commercial products (SBA, 2014). A rise in instances of government contracting scandals compelled the Congress to

established government contracting reforms that changed how government contracting employees conduct market research (Mothershed, 2012).

With the passage of the Federal Acquisition Streamlining Act of 1994 (FASA) and the Federal Acquisition Reform Act of 1996 (FARA), Congress changed procurement policies for government contracting organizations (SBA, 2014). An adoption of FASA and FARA enabled government contracting organizations to implement commercial regulations when procuring goods and services (Lansiti, 2012). Market research permits government contracting employees to gather information about target markets. Knowing the target market can assist government contracting employees in determining fair and reasonable pricing for government contracts. Although plans exist to govern the administration of individual contracts, barriers may prevent the government contracting employees from successfully doing their jobs.

When faced with obstacles when administering government contracts, government contracting employees must have the tools needed to overcome the barriers. Barriers to efficient government contracting may emerge through misunderstanding market dynamics, government service delivery, and responsibility to society (Johnston & Girth, 2012). Government contracting managers may intervene to improve or reduce barriers by conveying to suppliers improvement required in contractor performance; therefore, maximizing the scope of the contract (Johnston & Girth, 2012). An additional barrier to efficient government contracting may be the policy of outsourcing or contracting out government services (Smirnova & Leland, 2014). A lack of perceived competition, when contracting out government services, reduces implementation by

government organizations (Smirnova & Leland, 2014). Contracting out of government services made public procurement relevant to the economy (Costantino et al., 2012).

Government contracting organizations use outsourcing to seek government services through private companies (Payton & Kennedy, 2013). Government contracting-out stresses outsourcing provisions for services such as transportation services, garbage collection, janitorial, and similar services (Smirnova & Leland, 2014). Contracting out government services can provide an economic benefit (Chanson & Quelin, 2013). Given the heterogeneous nature of these services, it may be useful for government organizations to contract out those services. Private companies can compete for government service contracts (Johnston & Girth, 2012).

Occasions may exist for government contracting employees to manage service contracts unethically (Curry, 2010). Government contracting employees sometimes administer service contracts with minimal supervision (OPM, 1983). If the government contracting employees assign quality control responsibilities to vendors, the employees relinquish oversight of government contracting out services (Lamothe & Lamothe, 2013). Government contracting employees must incorporate the requirements, compliance with the law, and customer satisfaction related to the contract; these services should be conducted ethically (Witesman & Fernandez, 2013). Through the power of the purse, Congress authorized funds needed to manage government contracts (Manuel & Yeh, 2010).

Government contracting policies must provide clear guidelines on ethical standards (Kidalov & Snider, 2011). Federal Acquisition Regulations contain procedures

that govern government contracting (Cohn, 2011). OMB Circular A-76 detailed the processes for contracting out of goods and services with commercial or private interests (OMB, 2003). Although government contracting employees may encounter barriers to efficient government contracting, they must ethically administer government contracts to authorized suppliers. Contracting out a requirement for goods or services to commercial entities may entice government contracting employees to offer unapproved contracts to unauthorized suppliers in exchange for money. However, employees must consider their actions and the effect on all stakeholders. A government contracting manager's intervention may or may not be beneficial to controlling barriers in government contract administration.

Civilians/civil servants control large sectors of the government contracting entity. The Federal Procurement Data System – Next Generation [FPDS] (2014) revealed that the federal government contracting organizations employ approximately 1.8 million civilians or 16% of their workforce. Civilian control of some government contracting may strip the organizations of the discipline required to maintain ethical standards (Witko, 2011). The G.A.O. [U.S. GAO] (2009) reported an increase in cases of some government contracting employees influenced to make unwarranted contracts to suppliers in exchange for cash, gifts, and other nonmonetary awards. Reports of incidents of mismanagement of public funds have alerted Congress to enact new laws and prompted calls for oversight (as cited by Manuel & Yeh, 2010). To ensure suppliers' compliance with government contracts, government contracting employees can conduct proper oversight. Politics may affect the distribution of government contracts. Suppliers may

enlist the aid of political proponents to obtain government contracts; political proponents may influence government contracting employees to issue contracts to particular suppliers.

**Political Influence on the Awarding of Government Contracts**

Politics play a role in different sectors of U.S. life. Since Congress establishes the rules that direct government contracting, politics influences government contract administration. Outsourcing offers ways to improve governmental contracting activities through institutionalization of civil–military integration policies regardless of political affiliation (Awortwi, 2012). However, such redistribution of resources can lead to political disagreements rather than practical optimization. Private companies may try to use campaign contributions as bargaining tools to obtain government contracts (Witko, 2011).

In seeking to understand the impact that corporations and political proponents have on the distribution of government contracts, Kidalov and Snider (2011) studied political impact on contract performance. Politics can affect contracting decisions; therefore, the need exists to establish legal frameworks for contract delivery (Kidalov & Snider, 2011). There should be separation of politics, economic, and government contracting (Witko, 2011). Bromberg (2014) looked at why certain contractors received awards based on their political connections. Witko (2011) assessed that politics influences the dissemination of government contracts.

Private companies seek to determine the awarding of government contracts by contributing to political campaigns (Witko, 2011). With increased financial support that

an organization contributes to political campaigns, chance increases that the organization

may receive a government contract (Bromberg, 2014). Political influences might be

harmful to the contracting process (Jing, 2012). Zaidi et al. (2012) added to the body of

knowledge by exploring the impact that politics has on government contracting

employees working in overseas locations. Political control attributed to misuse and

incompetence of contract performance (Zaidi et al., 2012).

Politics can affect the contracting/procurement process; therefore, government

contracting organizations provide extra attention to the consequences of political pressure

on contract administration (Diggs & Roman, 2012). Yang and VanLandingham (2012)

observed an increase in the number of politically influenced government contracting

arrangements in the past decade. The government contracts awarded depends on how

politically active the business is (Yang & VanLandingham, 2012). Despite the

government contracting reforms, suppliers continue to win contracts based on their

political contributions (Witko, 2011). Detecting improper behaviors when administering

government contracts may be difficult; however, government authorities enacted laws

and controls to prevent unethical behaviors in government contracting (Acquisition

Central, 2014). The contract design influences various factors related to awarding the

contract to a supplier.

**Contract Design**

Government contracting employees might attempt to create government contracts

based on government contracting guidelines. Government outsourcing is an essential

delivery replacement to improve the effectiveness and flexibility benefits for private and

public companies (Van Milligen, 2012). The can stakeholders influence government organizations to operate effectively and efficiently (Van Milligen, 2012). Government contracting organizations assess the task of determining what companies can best offer products and services, and what contract design will be most useful to assign.

In identifying the factors that affect contract design choices, it is necessary to understand government contract design (Kim & Brown, 2012). Contract type and length of the performance can affect contract design decisions (Amey, 2012). Contract type refers to how the supplier reimburses the government contracting organization (Acquisition Central, 2014). The contract type option determines the contract design elements such as effectiveness of contract spending (Amey, 2012; Lamothe & Lamothe, 2012). Government contracting employees execute government contracts through contract implementation and design. Government contracting employees use contract design to maintain the affiliation with suppliers and government contracting organizations (SBA, 2014). Government contracts offer valued components in the delivery of goods and services (Malatesta & Smith, 2012b). There are two contract types in government contracting, fixed-price and cost-reimbursement (Bumgarner & Newswander, 2012). The goods or service procured determines the contract type.

To understand what effect a contract has on government contracting employees' procurement of goods and services, government contracting employee must know the difference between each government contract type. Despite the type of government contract, government contracting employees must follow the guidelines published in the FAR and other government contracting regulations. As stated in FAR part 16, fixed-price

contracts are non-negotiable, non-adjustable and offer maximum risk and full responsibility for all contract costs to the supplier (Acquisition Central, 2014). When negotiating a fixed-price contract, the supplier agrees to adhere to the contract requirements of a fixed-price and delivery within a specified time-frame (Malatesta & Smith, 2012b).

Using a firm-fixed price contract is possible if the government obtains the price for goods or services in advance (Malatesta & Smith, 2012b). When servicing a fixed-price contract, private companies receive fewer profits (Cribb, 2011). Offering fixed-price contracts to suppliers incentivizes the supplier to deliver quality outcomes to government contracting organizations. Vendors offering lower prices receive fixed-price contracts (Maser & Thompson, 2013). From 1993 through 2008, defense contracting doubled from $200 billion to $400 billion (Roberts, 2010). It is unclear why during the same time-frame, government contracting employees reduced the number of fixed-price contracts used and replaced them with cost-reimbursement contracts (Roberts, 2010). Government contracting organizations and suppliers negotiates cost-reimbursement contracts based on estimates of cost for goods or services (Acquisition Central, 2014).

Cost reimbursement contracts ensure suppliers that the government will reimburse the Supplier all reasonable cost occurred while executing the contract (Acquisition Central, 2014). Government contracting organizations discourage employees from using cost-reimbursement contracts due to the potential excessive cost to the government (Bumgarner & Newswander, 2012). In 2009, Congress passed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). The ARRA provided that the federal government

organization communicate a preference for using fixed-price contracts instead of cost-reimbursement contracts (Honek, Azar, & Menassa, 2012; Orndoff & Papkov, 2012). The Office of Management and Budget issued guidance to government contracting organizations regarding the use of cost-reimbursement contracts (OMB, 2003). Fixed-price contracts offered to suppliers may be beneficial to the government contracting organizations because government contracting employees can control costs associated with fixed-price contracts. Although cost-reimbursement contracts provide extreme benefits to suppliers, cost-reimbursement contracts can offer high cost and low value to the government.

Effective contract liability exists when government contracting agencies understand the prerequisites of contracting guidelines (Malatesta & Smith, 2012a). Government contracting organizations can ensure suppliers' responsibility for implementation of contract requirements (Malatesta & Smith, 2012a). Government contracting organizations use different contract designs (Kim & Brown, 2012). The category of a contract comprises decision-making since the contract affects service and performance (Kim & Brown, 2012). A government contract design reduces transaction costs associated with delivering services (Lumineau, Frechet, & Puthod, 2011). The design of each government contracts ensures best value to the government organization and customer.

Political and economic external forces may affect government contracting employees to go outside the scope of the contract; therefore, providing opportunities for circumventing of the legal parameters (Johnston & Girth, 2012). When delivering

contracts, competition is expected (Lamothe & Lamothe, 2012). Competition offers a level of cost control and provides quality delivery of goods and services. The length of a government contract may influence contract performance.

Government contract period is an agreed time to deliver goods or services to government contracting customers (Acquisition Central, 2014). Three elements of contract length exist in government contracting: spot market transactions, long-term measures, and contracts that specify a base period such as extending contracts for additional periods of time (Amey, 2012). Government contracting organizations prefer short-term contracts since a short-term contract reduces the risk to both the government contracting organizations and suppliers (Mols, 2010). Amey (2012) assessed that government contracting organizations use long-term contracts if uncertainty exists regarding the outcome of a contract.

The value of the contract results from the contract type and extent (Malatesta & Smith, 2012b). Fixed-price contracts determine the value ex-ante while cost-reimbursement contracts determine the value ex-post (Acquisition Central, 2014). Government contracting organizations can organize each contract to add length and value (Malatesta & Smith, 2012b). If the production of the goods or service is easy, the contract period is shorter. However, if difficulties occur with implementation of the goods and services, the government may extend the agreement to account for unknown factors (Acquisition Central, 2014). Government contracting employees must create government contracts to reduce production costs, reduce transaction costs, offer a profit to the supplier, and provide the government with quality goods and services. Different

government contracting organizations experience with administering specific contracts and suppliers who provide the goods and services as specified in each contract.

**Standards, Guidelines, Compliance, and Regulations**

Detailing the standards and guidelines that govern government contracting is essential to government contracting employees understanding the requirements for conducting their jobs ethically. Public service ethics requires that companies establish clear guidelines that conform to a changing global economic request for ethical standards (Adams & Balfour, 2010). The Small Business Administration established guidelines that provide adequate assistance to small businesses competing for government contracts (Johnston & Girth, 2012). Organizational standards should govern the company's ethical values (Noordegraaf, 2011). Government contracting employees' lack of adherence to an organization's standard operating procedures may be routine (Sinocruz, Hildebrand, Neuman, & Branaghan, 2011). Sinocruz et al. (2011) maintained that inconsistencies in establishing standard operating procedures might be a contributing factor to employees' inconstancy.

Understanding how ethical guidelines affect private companies may help government contracting employees to understand the importance of government rules. In an effort to understand how guidelines affect organizational standards, Ailon (2012) and Zhong (2011) looked at ethical decision making in large organizations such as ENRON. Although Enron established ethical standards, employees regularly engaged in unethical behaviors (Zhong, 2011). Unethical behaviors in Enron affected both individuals and

stakeholders (Ailon, 2012). Kumar (2014) considered standard operating procedures (SOPs), and the impact that vague guidelines might have on management processes.

SOPs provide guidelines for employees to ensure proper completion of the job (Manghani, 2011). An organization's standards of conduct should contain the company's ethical guidelines and values (Griffith, Connelly, & Thiel, 2011). An organization's compliance plan should incorporate ethics (Rowe & Kellam, 2011). U.S. federal regulations 5 CFR 2635-Standards of Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch, 41 USC 423-Procurement Integrity Act, and FAR-Federal Acquisition Regulations provide guidelines regarding government contracting personnel ethical behavior (Government Printing Office, 2011).

Revisiting government contracting compliance and regulations is necessary due to continued unethical behaviors by government contracting employees while administering government contracts (U.S. GAO, 2009). Not all government contracting employees are dishonest; however, to demonstrate ethical behavior when administering government contracts, employees must recuse themselves from instances that may indicate unethical behaviors (Acquisition Central, 2014; Clark, 2011). In case government contracting employees encounter instances of unethical behaviors, knowing what and why government contracting rules exist may help employees in their ethical decision-making.

Conforming to compliance and regulations can be difficult if no guidance occurs (Adams & Balfour, 2010). Within the context of the government contracting, compliance with FAR regulations exists. Due to continued unethical behaviors, the FAR Council established new ethics laws that required the creation of written codes of business ethics

(Johnson, Feng, Stizabee, & Jernigan, 2013). Government contracting ethics required augmentation (U.S. GAO, 2009). Compliance violations required the restructuring of the government contracting regulations (Johnson et al., 2013).

FAR regulation echoes the government contracting compliance rules (Cohn, 2011). Re-engineered subsections of the FAR clarify areas of the original law that seem confusing or unclear (Mukhopadhyay, 2011). Timely disclosures of unethical observations in some government contracting organizations remained a problem (U.S. GAO, 2009). Under Title 48 of the U.S. code of regulations, FAR part 3 prescribes policies and guidelines for avoiding inappropriate business practices and personal conflicts of interest when administering government contracts (Acquisition Central, 2014). Organizations may allow the government contracting employees to report unethical behaviors without fear of reprisal (Cassematis & Wortley, 2013). If the government contracting employees act unethically when administering government contracts, the employee may damage the public trust.

FAR Part 3 provides ethics and compliance rules and requirements for individuals doing government contracting business (Acquisition Central, 2014). The Competition in Contracting Act (CICA) allows the U.S. GAO to disclose full and thorough decision-making requirement in the government contracting (Maser, Subbotin, & Thompson, 2010). Government contracting rules and regulations provide tools that may exclude government contracting employees from behaving unethically (U.S. GAO, 2009). Congress established additional guidelines and regulations to assist government contracting employees when administering government contracts.

**Other Regulations and Guidance**

Numerous guidelines are available to assist the government contracting employee to do their jobs ethically. Federal statute 48 C.F.R. § 37.104(b) prohibits government contracting employees from participating in actions that affords financial gain (Acquisition Central, 2014). Public servants must depict accountability, legality, responsiveness, and integrity when doing their jobs (Elcock, 2012). The American Society for Public Administration (ASPA) code of ethics mandates that government employees deliberate public interest while doing government business (Svara, 2014).

As trust and ethics are essential to government contracting, employees must be sincere from the onset of employment and continue to demonstrate honest character traits throughout their profession. Predominate laws govern the government contracting process. The following are five primary regulations/guidelines that the government contracting organizations know: Armed Services Procurement Act of 1947 (ASPA), the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949 (FPASA), the Competition in Contracting Act (CICA), the Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR), and the Defense Acquisition Regulations Supplement (DFARS). ASPA regulates the acquisition of all property (except land), construction, and services by defense agencies (Acquisition Central, 2014).

As noted under 10. U.S.C. 2307 – Contract Financing, government contracting employees, may reimburse suppliers for services rendered under a government contract (GPO, 2011). Subpart 32.1 of the FAR notes that government contracting employees can create additional payments to suppliers for execution of contracts(Acquisition Central,

2014). The payments cannot exceed the negotiated price of the contract (Acquisition

Central, 2014). In 1949, with the enactment of the Federal Property and Administrative

Services Act of 1949 (FPASA), the General Services Administration developed (General

Services Administration [GSA], 2013). The GSA (2013) noted that FPASA regulates

procurement, utilization, and disposal of government property. CICA regulates both

defense and civilian purchases and mandates that all government contracting entities will

provide full and open competition prior to seeking sole-source acquisitions (U.S.

Department of Labor, 2003).

CICA directed that all contracting actions terminate if a vendor disputes any

provision of the contract through a GAO protest (Maser et al., 2010). The FAR is the

primary regulation in the Federal Acquisition System, and the DFARS are supplemental

documents to the FAR specifically structured for agencies in the Department of Defense

[DoD] (Cohn, 2011). The FAR and DFARS contain regulatory and policy guidelines for

implementation of government contracting functions (Wydler et al., 2013). In addition to

the principal laws, Congress generated supplementary sources that focused on alternative

government contracting requirements.

Additional sources include laws that the government contracting employees may

not utilize on a daily basis; however, the regulations may be necessary for particular

aspects of government contract administration. Congress enacted the Federal Acquisition

Streamlining Act of 1994 (FASA) in an attempt to reform government contracting

business (Lansiti, 2012). With the implementation of the FASA and the Federal

Acquisition Reform Act of 1996 (FARA), SBA (2014) noted that Congress emphasized the use of market research for the government agencies.

As detailed in the Federal Government Contracting Regulations (FAR), Subpart 12, FASA and FARA outlines and details the federal government's preferences for the acquisition of commercial items (Acquisition Central, 2014). The FASA and the FARA provided government contracting organizations with direction and authority to consider the cost of buying products and services from commercial or private suppliers (Lansiti, 2012). Adams and Balfour (2010) noted that the federal government organizations are dependent on contracting services to purchase goods and services. Overreliance on outsourcing led to scandals and public outcry for reform of government contracting policies(Adams & Balfour, 2010).

Enactment of regulatory policies provided simplification of aggressive policies for government contracting organizations when buying from commercial or private suppliers (Adams & Balfour, 2010). The purpose of FASA and FARA is to eliminate corruption and excessive cost in government contracting by focusing on competition. Adding competition to government contracting purchasing decisions might improve efficiency since competition causes suppliers to consider all aspects of the contract (Lamothe & Lamothe, 2012). The imposition of FASA and FARA revised more than 225 statutory regulations related to government contracting procurement (DOL, 2014b). Government contracting guidelines and regulations offer rules to ensure government contracting employees' compliance with established laws and may assist employees to

understand why behaving morally when conducting government contracting business is necessary.

## Transition and Summary

Section 1 of this study included a variety of topics and strategies such as the problem and purpose of the research. I assessed the nature of the study, identifying and describing the research question, looking at the conceptual framework, and the literature review of the study. The literature review provided a thorough background in the area of the government contracting. In Section 2, the focus was the project. I built on the foundation given in Section 1, with the research method and design used to assess elements of the managerial knowledge needed to prevent government contracting employees' unethical behaviors when administering contracts. In section 3, I explained and documented the findings of the study. I addressed implications for social change, presented explanations for actions deemed necessary for further study of this research topic, and concluded with reflections on the research process.

Section 2: The Project

In Section 2, I have provided a summary of the research components and explored government contracting employees' insights regarding the knowledge required to prevent unethical behaviors by government contracting employees. Section 2 covers (a) the intention of the doctoral study, (b) participants in the study, (c) research method and design, (d) population of the research, (e) data collection, and analysis techniques, (f) ethical research, and finally, (g) reliability and validity of the research process.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to provide a clear understanding of the knowledge required by government contracting managers to mitigate unethical behaviors of government contracting employees when administering contracts. In this case study, the research of Bao et al. (2013) formed the basis for researching and understanding the worth of management and leadership development in government contracting. Twenty-one government contracting managers from the Defense Logistics Agency in the mid-Atlantic region participated shared their insights about the strategies needed to stop employees' unethical behaviors when administering contracts. This study might affect a business practice by helping government contracting managers learn strategies to reduce contracting employee unethical behaviors when administering contracts.

**Role of the Researcher**

I was the principal data collection instrument. Pezalla, Pettigrew, and Miller-Day (2012) posited that the instrument is the researcher who critically collects data and

ensures that the information represents what participants are conveying. My dual role of researcher and business member presented both opportunities and challenges for this doctoral study. Having familiarity with the organization and access to information pertinent to this study did not present challenges in mitigating personal bias. Cleary et al. (2014) noted challenges in researching a specific population including engaging with participants, translating data, participant recruitment, data collection, and reliability. Establishing relationships with interviewees offered a broader perspective of the targeted culture (Cleary et al., 2014).

I used in-depth interviews to collect data for this research study. The qualitative researcher analyzes and interprets the data by presenting the value throughout the interview process (Vandenberg & Hall, 2011). A qualitative researcher should commit to the common good, mitigate bias, establish clear distinctions between the researcher and the research subject, and step out of his or her comfort zone. The qualitative researcher can incorporate participants' feedback into the study (Schoorman & Bogotch, 2010). In this study, the goals were to deliberate, gather, and present each participant's information in a reasonable and equitable manner (Watkins, 2012). It is necessary to mitigate personal beliefs and biases from a qualitative research study (Phillips-Pula, Strunk, & Pickler, 2011). Aluwihare-Samaranayake (2012) posited that the researcher notes the study environment in anticipation of challenges participants may encounter. Researchers need to possess the logical and cognitive skills characterized in a qualitative research study (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012).

For this study, using the technique employed under McCormack's lenses provided a flexible structure for analysis of multifaceted data. Drawing on an individual's experience and presenting their story in an unbiased manner proved beneficial (Dibley, 2011). Paulus, Lester, and Britt (2013) stressed that delivering participants' information in an unbiased manner is essential. The qualitative researcher must be knowledgeable about principles, practice, dialog, and relevance of the research subject (Mikecz, 2012; Watkins, 2012). Understanding the attributes of the qualitative researcher provided a comprehensive outcome to the research study. The principles of the Belmont Report stressed protection of individual's personal information (Greaney et al., 2012). The goal was to ensure that I offered integrity by ensuring that participants' information remains protected.

## Participants

This qualitative research study involved interviews with government contracting managers in Pay Grades GS-11 to GS-13 working at the Defense Logistics Agency in the mid-Atlantic region. As a government contracting employee working in the mid-Atlantic region, I had access to government contracting managers in the chosen geographic area. Having convenient access to individuals offered a contingent of individuals and eliminated the need for snowball sampling that involved participants referring other potential candidates (Cohen & Arieli, 2011). Each participant received an invitation that explained the purpose and intent of the study along with a blanket consent form. The consent form contained a statement that participation in this study was optional and that declining to participate in the study could occur at any time. The names of individuals

will remain confidential (Fouka & Mantzorou, 2011; Gibson, Benson, & Brand, 2013). An individual's experience will determine their participation in this study.

Protecting participants from harm by obtaining informed consent will ensure each participant's right to privacy. Privacy and security of participants' information is a priority (Harvey, 2011). Obtaining consent to participate in sensitive research studies could be difficult (Elmir, Schmied, Jackson, & Wilkes, 2011; Mehta et al., 2012). The nature of this proposed research study may be sensitive as it involved obtaining information from government contracting managers. Walden University (2011) requires researchers conducting interviews with potentially vulnerable group to get permission to conduct the research study. I asked and received permission from The Department of Defense, Office of Security Review and Defense Logistics Agency, Public Affairs Office to conduct this study. An authorizing official from the participation organization offered permission to conduct this study. Each participant received an identifier such as P1, P2, or P3. During the interview process, some participants added information to the interview subject. All study data including interview transcripts and analysis information will remain secure for a 5-year period (Walden University, 2011). After the 5-year period, I will permanently destroy the study data by shredding all paper copies and writing over any electronic records. Ensuring the privacy and comfort of government contracting managers established ease with sharing information.

## Research Method and Design

Academic strategies may employ an exclusively qualitative, quantitative, or mixed method research design that combines qualitative and quantitative data into the

same plan (Harland & Holey, 2011). A qualitative methodology and case study research design led this research study. Using elements of a qualitative research provided benefit to this study by including rigorous data collection from in-depth, semistructured interviews (Djuraskovic & Arthur, 2011). Using semistructured interviews facilitated obtaining real-world information from participants in Pay Grades GS-11 to GS-13 working at the Defense Logistics Agency in the mid-Atlantic region (Deschaux-Beaume, 2012).

**Method**

This study followed a qualitative method. Qualitative research method allows researchers to describe naturally occurring phenomenon through pragmatic assumptions, interpretive analysis, and ideological commitments (Hibbert et al., 2014). Quantitative research links scientific investigation with measurable relationships between variables based on statistical interpretations and conceptual arguments (Kozlowski et al., 2013). The qualitative research process allows for consideration of questions based on participants' characterization of real-world events and offers insight into a phenomenon (Bansal & Corley, 2011). Hazzan and Nutov (2014) posited that the problem considered influences the methods employed in the research study. The qualitative research process comprises a practical application of predetermined questions to get the perspectives of a small group of participants regarding their experiences (Perry, 2013). Conducting semistructured interviews allowed participants to provide additional information to enrich the research subject (Cleary et al., 2014).

Quantitative data provides identification and categorization of participants' perceptions. Using a quantitative process entails theories, statistical analysis, and hypothesis to draw a conclusion (Kozlowski et al., 2013). This research does not require statistical data analysis, therefore, does not meet the criteria for a quantitative study (Goertz & Mahoney, 2012). Using a quantitative approach may prevent researchers from replicating this study. Quantitative researchers might fail to grasp the complexity and essence of the information participants of the study (Kisely & Kendall, 2011; Wuest, 2011). Sussman (2011) maintained that a qualitative research method is an evidenced based approach that allows understanding a situation from the participant's perspective. Since a mixed method employs both qualitative and quantitative methods, it is not suited for this study (Collingridge, 2013).

**Research Design**

Some researchers prefer qualitative case study designs to address issues regarding social, organizational, and institutional effects in individual organizations or groups and to promote change or improve practice (Mukhopadhyay & Gupta, 2014). Understanding the phenomenon of why government contracting managers lack knowledge to preventing unethical behaviors by government contracting employees administering governing contracts is vital to preventing future unethical behaviors. Principal research designs designated for qualitative studies include case study, narrative, ethnography, grounded theory, and phenomenological (Tracy, 2013). The research question shapes the research design (Denzin, 2012). Choosing the right design to fit the research question produced noteworthy outcome (Aslam et al., 2012). The research design most appropriate for this

study was a single case study. Perry (2013) indicated that the foundation of case study

research is the study of human experience and the direction of human awareness towards

those experiences. Choosing a research design that allowed understanding of participants'

perspectives was important in finding answers to the research question.

When related literature is limited, Yin (2013) posited that a case study proves

useful for gathering data. The case study design justified the research question by helping

me to specify two purposes. The research question helped me to articulate the goal for

this study and the conceptual framework as well as gave credence to the correlation

among methods and validity of the study (Maxwell, 2013). This case study design will

allow focus on the process within one organization during a short time frame. The result

of this study offered the emphasis on the process rather than the outcome and holistic

view of the issue rather than isolated factors (Kumar, 2012). Other designs considered

included phenomenological, narrative, ethnography, and grounded theory.

Although a phenomenological design suited this research study because it relies

primarily on participant interviews, the researcher does not focus on one individual or

group (Ivey, 2013). Narrative research shares similar traits with the case study; however,

narrative research is time-consuming (Kisely & Kendall, 2011). Ethnographic qualitative

research that focuses on collecting data from a particular culture or sharing group did not

suit this study; the process is also timely and costly (Nayelof, Fuchs, & Moreira, 2012).

Grounded theory research was not suitable because grounded theory does not require a

fixed time for concluding this research study; grounded theory can be never-ending (Ji

Young & Eun-Lee, 2014). Case study describes a current circumstance, is multifaceted and can provide different answers to complex problems (Sharp et al., 2011).

**Population and Sampling**

The population of this research study consisted of government contracting managers working at the Defense Logistics organization in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States. The target sample was a purposeful selection of government contracting managers in Pay Grades GS-11 to GS-13. A qualitative researcher embraces purposeful sampling (Suri, 2011). Offstein, Dufresne, and Childers (2012) used purposeful sampling to analyze the behavior and moral development at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. Using purposeful sampling in qualitative research allows the researcher to capture the value and in-depth understanding of participants' information not available from random sampling (Reybold, Lammert, & Stribling, 2013). Offstein et al. (2012) assessed that using a purposeful sampling provided for the separation of individuals based on qualification criteria. Silen, Kjellstrom, Christensson, Sidenvall, and Svantesson (2012) used purposeful sampling to consider an ethical environment in nursing. Using a purposeful sampling allowed the researchers to gain perspectives from a vast distribution of subject matter experts (Silen et al., 2012).

Qualitative researchers use purposeful sampling to select participants based on experience and nuanced understanding (Koch, Niesz, & McCarthy, 2014). Purposeful sampling was the desired method of selecting government contracting managers to participate in the semistructured interviews. Using a purposeful sampling to deliberate government contracting managers' insights regarding unethical behavior when

administering government contracts, suited this study. When using purposeful sampling, the qualitative researcher should decide the demographics and number of participants sampled as well as the sampling used (Elo et al., 2014; Plano Clark et al., 2013). A purposeful selection of participants involved in the experience and willingness to participate in the study (Damianakis & Woodford, 2012; Morinder, Biguet, Mattsson, Marcus, & Larsson, 2011). Sample size and geographical area provided adequate control over the evaluation process (Coenen, Stamm, Stucki, & Cieza, 2012). To be a part of this study, participants were government contracting managers from a Defense Logistics Agency in Pay Grades GS-11 through GS-13.

Qualitative research studies typically have smaller sample sizes. When there is no further information and redundancy is evident, the researcher obtains saturation (Walker, 2012). Determining saturation in this qualitative research study aided in getting an adequate sample size of participants (O'Reilly & Parker, 2012). In this research process, I reached saturation when redundancy occurred, and I gain no additional data. If the population is too large or varies significantly, the information given might be overwhelming (Draper & Swift, 2011; Roberts, 2013). Based on Walden University (2011) criteria, a minimum of 20 participants is an adequate sample size for conducting this research study. Twenty-one individuals suited this study. As a result, the information was richer and more detailed (Cooke, Smith, & Booth, 2012). A sample size of 21 government contracting managers proved an adequate population of experiences to analyze the research data adequately and find themes of understanding. In addition, ensuring that replication of the research may be an important aspect to justifying this

study (Yin, 2013). Yin (2013) posited that since future researchers may not have access to the same participants or data, the results might differ. Therefore, the goal for this study was to produce research that could amplify and edify reader's understanding.

## Ethical Research

The qualitative researcher might address ethical challenges prior to conducting the study (Hoskins & White, 2013). Haahr, Norlyk, and Hall (2014) assessed that respect for autonomy, kindness, and impartiality may alleviate ethical issues. Significance of ethical research emphasizes integrity of the researcher and highlights tensions between participation and rigor of the study (Nind, Wiles, Bengry-Howell, & Crow, 2013). Quality in this doctoral study involved the capability to complete Walden University's Internal Review Board (IRB) approval process (Walden University, 2011).

Certification of training from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) was a necessary step in obtaining an approved Doctoral project from the Walden University IRB. Walden University Office of Research Ethics and Compliance approved this research proposal prior to data collection. After approval from the Walden University IRB, I notified each participant of the doctoral process. I notified potential participants using e-mail, phone, or direct contact prior to the interview process. Each individual received an invitation to participate in the study along with the consent form. On the consent form, I stated that participation in the study was optional and reiterated that participants received no compensation for participating (VanderWalde & Kurzban, 2011). Participants reviewed, ask questions for clarity, and sign the consent form stating understanding of all parameters.

Ethically, it was important to obtain permission to conduct the study because I must prove adherence to provisions for protecting human subjects and permission to use the interview instrument obtained. To ensure participant's privacy and to conduct the interviews uninterrupted, I arranged sit-down time both face-to-face and via telephone with each person away from the workplace. Out of respect for privacy, individual's names will not appear in the doctoral study. Individuals will receive unique identifiers of P1 through P20. I notified individuals regarding their right to withdraw for the interviews at any time without penalty (Trier-Bieniek, 2012). At the end of the discussions, participants reviewed a copy of their interview transcripts for accuracy and noted no changes. I will keep all research data including written, audio and electronic securely for a 5-year period after which the data will be shredded or electronically written over (Walden University, 2011).

## Data Collection

How the researcher gathers data may affect individuals' willingness to participate in the research study (Covell, Sidani, & Ritchie, 2012). Engaging participants in multidisciplinary dialogs may bring richness to the conversation for both researcher and participant (Hibbert et al., 2014). The goal is to engage participants in a comprehensive dialog while mitigating personal bias during the interview process.

## Instruments

I was the principal data collection instrument (Pezalla et al., 2012). Pezalla et al. (2012) posited that the researcher as the data collection instrument constructs ideas from data presented during the interview process. The goal for data collection in this study was

to gather information related to government contracting managers' knowledge to prevent

unethical behaviors by government contracting employees when administering contracts.

Additional goals were to provide enhanced description of the results of the interviews

that may assist the organization to implement best practices and process improvements

regarding ethical requirements when administering government contracts. Interviews

were the primary method of data collection in this doctoral study. Open-ended,

semistructured interview questions facilitated the understanding of the phenomenon

captured in the following question: what knowledge do government contracting managers

need to mitigate unethical behaviors of government contracting employees when

administering contracts? Yin (2011) posited that an open-ended, semistructured interview

question provides the qualitative research the opportunity to obtain in-depth answers

from personal questions.

In this case study, 21 midlevel managers participated in semistructured interviews

directly related to the study topic. Potential weakness of this interview method involved

interviewer bias and response bias. Strengths of this method included onsite access to

participants and the opportunity to gain a clear understanding of contextual indications.

Case study proved accurate and credible by using multiple data collection sources (Yin,

2013). Data collection included interviews and documents such as prior case studies and

government reports.

When using interviews as a data collection instrument, the researcher can ensure

that the interviews could provide substance to the research study (Waite, 2014). The

qualitative researcher can move from one-dimensional view of his or her understandings

and embrace the insights of participants as given in interviews (Turner & Norwood, 2013). Nind et al. (2013) used semistructured interviews to explore the interaction between ethics and methodological innovation in qualitative research. Nind et al. (2013) noted that the venue for conducting interviews was as important as the interview instrument. Ethical sensitivities such as public exposure and participant confidentiality were critical in successful interviews (Nind et al., 2013). Vogl (2013) compared participants and researchers' interactions using semistructured telephone and face-to-face interviews and the impact that each form of dialog had on participants. Vogl noted no major difference in participants' interactions with the researcher based on the type of interview used; however, the environment contributed to determining the best mode for conducting the interviews.

The comfort level of participants determined the interview venue (Vogl, 2013). Documentation of participants' responses from the interviews ensured reliability of the data (Yilmaz, 2013). Reliability in qualitative research correlates with an approximation of the sample, time, and participants' accounts (Newman, Lim, & Pineda, 2013). I transcribed participants' interview responses on interview instruments located in a secured folder on my personal computer using Microsoft Word.

## Data Collection Technique

Semistructured interviews and prior documentation were the data collection method used in this qualitative doctoral study. Discussions using eight semistructured interview questions comprised the interview process. Government contracting employees are acquisition experts acquiring goods and services for the benefit of the government

entities, customers, and community (OPM, 1983). In a qualitative research design, the researcher collects information through observations, documentation, and interviews (Marais, 2012; Yilmaz, 2013). Participants in a qualitative interview know the researcher and feel confident that the researcher will protect their privacy (Qu & Dumay, 2011). Qu and Dumay (2011) posited that a researcher should prepare and carefully plan for the interview process. A researcher might focus on the interviewee and allow the individual to present details useful to the interview process (Cleary et al., 2014). The semistructured interviews took place at mutually agreed upon locations (Pyer & Campbell, 2012). The qualitative exploration of this study assessed the factors that might contribute to unethical behaviors by government contracting employees and the knowledge to help managers in reducing employees' unethical behaviors.

I used member checking to confirm the accuracy of my understanding of participants' data and to ensure accurate representation of participants' information (Harper, & Cole, 2012). Based on Mero-Jaffe's (2011) assessment, participants used member checking to review the study data to determine if I portrayed his or her information accurately. Participants received appropriate sections of the research report and offered comments on the accuracy of the report (Koelsch, 2013). Using member checking, allowed me to focus on the content of participants' experiences and request comment on participants' review (Goldblatt, Karnieli-Miller, & Neuman, 2011). Transcription of interviews and member checking established the validity of the research data by confirming what participants intended to say (Harper, & Cole, 2012). Organizing the data into manageable files also helped with validity of the study.

**Data Organization Techniques**

Data coding consisted of participants' information from the study data. Data management involved deciding the most efficient data organization technique to use. Preserving participants' data electronically, and non-electronic increased the effectiveness of the data analysis (Cliggett, 2013). Data organization techniques included creating an electronic journal, placing responses in the order of interviews, and electronically storing data in a folder called *Participants' Information* (Watkins, 2012). To ensure privacy, each participant received identifiers of P1, P2, P3, and so on (Damianakis & Woodford, 2012). I transcribed the data into a Word document and pasted the transcribed information into Ethnograph v6 software. Protecting the privacy and confidentiality of the research data will remain for 5-years.

**Data Analysis Technique**

Transcribing research data is beneficial in member checking (Harvey, 2015). When member checking was complete, and clarifications made, I began data analysis. Qualitative data analysis techniques involve reducing data into themes or categories (Yin, 2011). The Ethnograph v6 computer software package used in data analysis proved beneficial to helping with analyzing raw data collected from the semistructured interviews by marking the data with specific identifiers assigned to interview participants (Gullion & Ellis, 2014). Qualitative researchers use data analysis to consider data concerning particular phenomena (Collingridge, 2013; Oliver, 2011).

A qualitative, case study research was preferred to obtain new information from government contracting employees and to provide management with a better

understanding of what causes unethical behaviors. Understanding factors associated with government contract managers lacking knowledge required to stop contracting employees' unethical behaviors when administering contracts provided additional discussion questions.

**Interview Questions**

The interview questions I used to address the research question were:

1.  What are the issues that you face as the manager of government contracting employees regarding unethical behaviors?

2.  What are the fundamentals that you as a manager use to assist government contracting employees in understanding how to perform their duties ethically?

3.  What are the elements of the organization's philosophy that you as a manager use to address government contracting employees' unethical behaviors when administering contracts?

4.  What are the challenges confronting you as a manager in determining ethical implementation of the organization's philosophy?

5.  What training and development methods do you use better guide employees to act ethically?

6.  How can training and development methods be improved and incorporated as an integral part of government contract administration?

7.  What benefits can result from employees' ethical administration of government contracts?

8. What further questions, comments, or information do you have that may be beneficial to this study?

The recommendations of qualitative methodology provided the basis for this study because this study did not require hypothesis testing or statistical interpretations. I focused on obtaining meaningful characterization of real-world events (Yin, 2011). To start the data analysis process, I asked each participant eight open-ended questions. After copying the research data into Microsoft Word, Nayelof et al. (2012) assessed that the researcher may use software in data analysis. Upon loading the data in the Ethnograph v6 software, the search for common themes ensued. This process provided a systematic manner for coding data into key themes (Housley & Smith, 2011; Kisely & Kendall, 2011; Paulus et al., 2013). Crede and Borrego (2013) used inductive coding to gather information related to graduate engineering student retention. Mitra, Serriere, and Stoicovy (2012) used inductive coding to explore the correlation among leaders and student participation. Likewise, Siwale and Ritchie (2012) used inductive coding to look at the loan officer's multifaceted role in developing countries. Key themes emerged when I used inductive coding in the data analysis process (Crede & Borrego, 2013).

## Reliability and Validity

Addressing reliability and validity helped in achieving verification of this research study. To ensure the reliability and validity of the research, I searched for logical conclusions based on the analyzed data (Dolnicar, 2013). In this study, I assessed the validity in relation to the purpose of the research study and participants' perspectives.

**Reliability**

Reliability of the qualitative research addresses the ability of other researchers to replicate the study. Reliability in qualitative research emphasizes the nonexistence of careless errors and presents the research in raw data(Zachariadis, Scott, & Barrett, 2013). This process allows other researchers to replicate the research findings with the same results (Zachariadis et al., 2013). Protecting the integrity, quality, and reliability of the research data was a key focus of the study (Koro-Ljungberg & Bussing, 2013). Documentation of all aspects of assessment established reliability and credibility of the data (Yilmaz, 2013). Reliability of this study was an essential objective. Jorgensen (2012) maintained that reliability in qualitative research depends on an accurate representation of research participants' perspectives and the link to the research question. Campbell, Quincy, Osserman, and Pedersen (2013) posited that a necessary step in validating a coding scheme in qualitative research entails the use of intercoders. Intercoder reliability can be a key component of the qualitative data analysis process (Campbell et al., 2013). Using a source familiar with the Ethnograph v.6 software did not offer value in this process.

**Validity**

Researchers use validity in qualitative research to verify the authenticity of the study (Koch et al., 2014). The qualitative researcher uses validity to outline the association with the research design and the data interpretations (Koro-Ljungberg, 2013; Sirriyeh, Lawton, Gardner, & Armitage, 2012; Wallace, 2011). To understand the role that validity plays in qualitative research, Newman et al. (2013) conducted a study to

assess the methods for estimating content validity. Validity strengthens the trustworthiness of the research tools. In this case study, validity occurred through techniques such as member checking, triangulation, and data saturation (Newman et al., 2013).

As in reliability, using member checking provided grounds for data validation. Employing member checking to ensure that each participant reviewed a copy of their interview transcript for accuracy served to validate the data. Harper and Cole (2012) posited that member checking or respondent validation improves the accuracy and validation of the study. Using member checking allowed participants to verify findings, provide feedback, and provide further insights beneficial to this study (Harper & Cole, 2012). Summarizing the data and obtaining participants' feedbacks, corrections, and additional insights provided clarity in the final data analysis. Allowing each participant to review a copy of their transcript offered further validity to this study by promoting affirmation, feedback, critique, and cooperation (Tracy, 2013).

Embracing triangulation throughout the validation phase of the research process helped in mitigating bias (Suri, 2011). Methodological triangulation from interviews and documentation strengthened the validity of this study (Bekhet & Zauszniewski, 2012). Yin (2013) posited that data triangulation supports the validity of a case study. Methodological triangulation from interviews and exploration of documents related to the research subject identified similarities and differences in current responses and past observances (Bekhet & Zauszniewski, 2012). My objective of this study was to use data

triangulation to promote the completeness of the data collection and classify emerging findings (Boblin, Ireland, Kirkpatrick, & Robertson, 2013).

Data saturation occurred when no new themes emerged, and coding became routine (O'Reilly, Paper, & Marx, 2012). Although I reached the saturation point after 16 interviews, I continued to interview participants until I conducted 21 semistructured interviews. Cliggett (2013) posited that qualitative studies contain limitations. Although I found themes to support the research question, this study may be limited and presents opportunities for future research. The inability to study all managers in government contracting presents further limits on this study. However, information gathered through the interview process, document inquiry, and data analysis should be transferability to members of the contracting community.

**Transition and Summary**

The objective in Section 2 of this research was to assess the purpose of the research, examine the role of the researcher and analyze the selection of individuals participating in the research study. I looked at the data collection process and provided an explanation of reliability and validity methods. I detailed the findings of the research and explained applications of professional practices, implications for social change, and recommendations for future research study in Section 3.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

    This section contains the results of an analysis of the knowledge required by government contracting managers to mitigate unethical behaviors of employees when administering contracts. In addition, Section 3 contains an overview of the study, the findings of the study, and applications for professional practice. I review (a) implications for social change, (b) recommendations for action, including dissemination of results, (c) recommendation for further study on government contracting managers' perceived level of understanding of government contracting ethical regulations, (d) reflections of my experience conducting this research study, as well as (e) the study summary and conclusions.

## Overview of Study

    The purpose of this qualitative case study was to provide a clear understanding of the knowledge required by government contracting managers to mitigate unethical behaviors of government contracting employees when administering contracts. To comprehend the government contracting managers' understanding, I established one research question and eight supporting interview questions. The research and interview questions are instrumental to the presentation of the findings presented in this chapter.

    Data collection included 21 semistructured interviews and company documents pertaining to ethical requirements of doing government contracting. Company documents as well as the interviews provided methodological triangulation of the data. After transcribing, I uploaded the data to Ethnograph v6 software for coding. I analyzed the data and discovered four emerging themes. The themes related to organizational strategic

guidelines as described in the company documents. The four themes comprised (a) ethics requires continued training, (b) trust is vital, (c) adequacy of training, and (d) benefits of ethical government contracting. The findings from the data analysis revealed evidence that supported the conclusion that training and communication are central to managing government contracting employees' unethical behaviors.

## Presentation of the Findings

The findings from data analysis presented pertain to the central research question: what knowledge do government contracting managers need to mitigate unethical behaviors of government contracting employees when administering contracts? Framed by the stakeholder theory, a qualitative case study was designed and purposeful sampling used which resulted in 21 government contracting managers answering eight open-ended questions (Appendix A) regarding contracting managers' understanding of the knowledge required to diminish unethical behaviors of government contracting employees when administering contracts. I analyzed participants' responses from face-to-face interviews and company documents using Ethnograph v6 software to assist in establishing the findings.

The sample came from a group of government contracting managers at the Defense Logistics Agency in the mid-Atlantic area of the United States. Twenty-one participants responded to the research question. To protect participants' privacy, I replaced participants' names with codes such as P1, P2, P3, through P 21. Based on the interview questions, participants presented responses that varied in scope, depth, and consideration. The response rate of individuals willing to participate in the study

represented 100% of participants approached. Based on Dibley's (2011) assessment of McCormack's Lens, I drew on each participant's experience to develop and present the research findings in an unbiased manner. Although I used the questions in (see Appendix A) to direct each interview, an open-ended interview approach guided the interview process.

The conceptual framework for this research study was stakeholder theory. The concept of stakeholder theory which encourages business managers to consider the principles of organizational and public ethics when determining business compliance (Freeman, 1984) was supported by much of the interview responses and reiterated by the company documents. Four themes emerged which demonstrated similarities and differences amongst participants. Gioia, Corley, and Hamilton (2013) posited that themes in qualitative research emerge from patterns not predetermined. Qualitative researchers focus on new patterns, themes, or information that provides new insight into a specific subject (Gioia, et al., 2013). The four emerging themes reflected vital results of this study and represented more than 80% of the responses in each category.

**Emergent Theme 1: Ethics Requires Continued Training.**

In regards to training or development methods managers used to guide government contracting employees to administer contracts ethically, 38% of participants relied on established policies and guidance while 52% assessed that regular training was key (see Table 2). As noted by 11 participants, annual training plays a vital role in ensuring that any changes in organizational policies are clearly outlined. Findings from this study enforces Witesman and Fernandez's (2013) assessment that incorporating

government contracting requirements, compliance with the law, and customer satisfaction related to administering government contracts encourages ethical behaviors.

Participants posited that training government contracting employees on the fundamentals of the FAR, DFARS, and local ethical guidance presented further opportunities for employees to understand the requirements of doing their jobs ethically. Warren, Gasper, and Laufer (2014) posited that formal ethics training encourages ethical organizational development; therefore, may decrease instances of unethical behaviors. In addition, five percent of participants stated that open communication presents further opportunities for presenting ethical training and development to government contracting employees. Another 5% of participants posited that managers must lead by example.

Table 2

*Nodes Related to Theme 1: Frequency of Themes for Ethics Requires Continued Training*

| Theme | n | % of frequency of occurrence |
|---|---|---|
| Clarity is needed in regard to organizational standards | 14 | 66% |
| FAR, DFARS, local policies | 13 | 62% |
| Training/development methods used - regular/continued training | 11 | 52% |
| No problems with implementing organizational standards | 10 | 48% |
| Training/development methods used - established policies | 8 | 38% |
| Improvement in ethical policies | 6 | 29% |
| Communicating organizational policies proved challenging | 5 | 24% |
| Problems balancing urgency of need with quality | 3 | 14% |

*Note*: n = frequency

Different managers have different styles, views, and ideas. In fact, participants noted various fundamentals to address government contracting employees' understanding of the ethical requirements needed to administer government contracts. However, the

majority of participants, 62%, relied on policies and guidance such as the FAR, DFARS, and local policies to guide employees to do their jobs ethically. Participants posited that communication is vital to clearly presenting fundamentals needed by employees (see table 2).

Forty-eight percent of participants indicated no problems in implementing the organization leaders' policies. These participants maintained that leading by example and clearly communicating the organization's philosophies appeared important to employees understanding and implementation of those policies. However, 24% of participants stated that communicating the organization's policies seemed challenging because the policies were at times unclear (see Table 2). Findings from this study discount Rotter, Airlike, and Mark-Herbert's (2014) findings that managers willingly manipulate regulatory policies to ensure that cases of unethical behaviors dissipate. Waldman and Balven (2014) posited that responsible leaders can influence their employees ethically. Notwithstanding, P17 posited that the organizational policies are subject to individual interpretation. P8 assessed that the policies constantly changes and that the guidelines offered appear contradictory or confusing to the employees.

When asked how the participants could overcome the challenges presented, 66% (see Table 2) posited that being able to understand the organization's policies and not offering personal interpretations could be helpful in clearly communicating the philosophies to their government contracting employees. The managers maintained that the policies written in legal language makes it challenging to interpret and present to the government contracting employee. Another issue that 14% of participants presented was

that helping government contracting employees to balance urgency of need with attaining quality of service made implementing the organization leaders' policies and philosophies challenging. Organizations in the public arena are expected to retain desirable traits of public trust resource administration and good governance (Pomeranz et al., 2014).

The theme associated with *ethics requires continued training* included the answers related to understanding the requirements needed to mitigate the government contracting employees' unethical behaviors. The patterns found in participants' responses included words that referred to (a) maintaining required training, (b) providing relevant training, (c) ensuring that regulations are clear and concise, and (d) communicating ethical guidelines to government contracting employees.

**Emergent Theme 2: Trust is Vital.**

Participants' views varied based on their experience and beliefs. Fifty-two percent of participants indicated that they had not faced unethical behaviors with their employees administering government contracts. Some managers addressed issues encountered. For example, 14% assessed that unethical vendors caused employees to behave unethically (see Table 3). The participants maintained that if unethical vendors do not approach employees and offer money for contracts, employees might not have a reason to administer contracts unethically.

Table 3

*Nodes Related to Theme 2: Frequency of Themes for Trust is Vital*

| Theme | n | *% of frequency of occurrence* |
|---|---|---|
| Honesty, integrity is representative of organizational philosophy | 8 | 38% |
| Communication | 5 | 24% |
| Unethical vendors | 3 | 14% |
| Individual Beliefs | 2 | 10% |
| Training used in employees' development | 2 | 10% |
| D1: DLA Director's Guidance - Engage with employees, customers, and stakeholders | 3 | 100% |

*Note*: n = frequency

Ten percent of participants posited that individual beliefs drive ethical/unethical

behaviors. These managers affirmed Elcock's (2012) assessment that public servants

must depict accountability, legality, responsiveness, and integrity when doing their jobs.

The managers posited that if an individual has high ethical standards, they would not

cooperate with unethical vendors presenting money for favors. The employees will

administer contracts based on the ethical standards set forth in government contracting

guidance. Twenty-four percent of participants confirmed DLA Director's guidance (see

Table 3) that communication is vital to ensuring that government contracting employees

understand the ethical guidelines and the ramifications of going outside the scope of the

established policies. Participants' responses varied based on the type of employees they

managed.

A small minority, 10%, maintained that more than any other factors, using

training to develop government contracting employees might affect employees' ethical

understanding of government contracting administration. The bulk of participants looked at the organization's philosophies and combined them with their personal beliefs when addressing unethical behaviors in government contracting employees. Tomescu and Popescu (2013) posited that moral judgments pose substantial challenges to individual and organizational integrity. Thirty-eight percent of participants posited that honesty and integrity represented DLA's primary philosophy.

DLA's mission is to support the warfighter by offering value-added supplies and services at a fair and reasonable price while keeping in mind the philosophy of honesty and integrity, above all else (DLA, 2013). Participants posited that open communications allowed employees to document and report unethical behaviors encountered. Participants stated that leading by example was a primary factor for mitigating government contracting ethical behaviors. If the employee understood the organization's philosophy and the manager's willingness to enforce the policies, the employee might be willing to follow the required ethical guidelines.

Themes included those questions related to participants' perceptions of issues managers may face regarding the knowledge needed to mitigate unethical behaviors of government contracting employees when administering contracts. The answers belonging to the theme *trust is vital* contained patterns based on participants' responses such as *honesty, integrity,* and *ethics*. The categories of significance in the responses included: *integrity* with six responses, *honesty* with four responses, and *ethics* with three responses, thus demonstrating the relevance that the category had on participants. The category

related to *trust is vital* included participants' responses reflecting that values, trust, and morals must guide ethical behaviors.

**Emergent Theme 3: Adequacy of Training.**

Thirty-eight percent of participants assessed that training offered provided government contracting employees with adequate discipline needed to do their jobs ethically (see Table 4). While those managers determined no improvements were needed, 29% of participants posited that training offered must be relevant to the work employees do. Participants confirmed Warren et al.'s (2014) assessment that formal ethics training encourages ethical organizational development and decreases instances of unethical behaviors. P4 assessed that training must be tailored to each government contracting activity. The managers suggested that sometimes training offered by the organization differed from the scope of work employees do therefore making the training appear irrelevant.

Table 4

*Nodes Related to Theme 4 - Frequency of Themes for Adequacy of Training*

| Theme | n | % of frequency of occurrence |
|---|---|---|
| Current training is sufficient | 8 | 38% |
| Training must be relevant | 6 | 29% |

*Note*: n=frequency

Ensuring that adequacy of training is presented to government contracting employees is vital to sustaining an ethical workforce. With only 38% of managers agreeing that training offer is sufficient, I recommend that relevant, reoccurring training

is offered to current and future government contracting employees. Relevant training can provide the government contracting workforce with the ability to conduct self-assessments related to government contracting ethical requirements. Managers also confirmed Verschoor's (2014) belief that organizational ethics training is critical to effectively presenting an ethical culture within the organization. P2 and P4 posited that training must be relevant and comply with established regulations.

**Emergent Theme 4: Benefits of Ethical Government Contracting.**

Participants stressed benefits for mitigating government contracting employees' unethical behaviors. Benefits included (a) improvements to customer service, (b) cost savings, (c) boosting consumer confidence in government contracting organizations, (d) self-satisfaction, and (e) improvement in workforce performance. The managers agreed that it was beneficial for government contracting employees to do their jobs ethically. Overwhelmingly, as noted in Table 5, 76% of participants assessed cost savings as a major benefit. P5 noted an effective use of taxpayer dollars, while P11 posited that knowing that taxpayer's money is spent ethically may benefit society. Whether cost savings to the government, customer or the public, participants affirmed DLA Director's guidance (see Table 5) that saving money benefits all stakeholders.

Results from this study confirm Ayuso et al. (2012) findings that focusing on the broader area of stakeholder management and social responsibility enhancements ethical compliance within government contracting. Thirty-five percent of participants noted other potential benefits (see table 5) including improvements in customer service, boosting consumer confidence, improvement to the workforce, and 19% noted self-

satisfaction. As noted within the conceptual framework of this study, changes to the

government contracting policies can benefit all stakeholders. Freeman (1984) posited that

incorporating ethics with organizational strategies benefits not only the organization but

also all stakeholders. Benefiting stakeholders embraces good customer service.

Table 5 *Benefits of Ethical Government Contracting*

| Theme | n | *% of frequency of occurrence* |
|---|---|---|
| Current training is sufficient | 8 | 38% |
| Training must be relevant | 6 | 29% |
| D2: DLA Director's Guidance - Achieve price reductions across DLA's | 1 | 100% |

*Note*: n=frequency


Participants confirmed SBA (2014) assessment that customer service and

customer satisfaction encompass the administration of government contracts. Lorne and

Dilling (2012) posited that matching organization and customer values can produce a

customer-centric environment. Lorne and Dillings' assessment confirms DLA's (2013)

customer service mission.

**Particular Situations**

The category related to *trust is vital* addressed ideas regulated by principles or

values that apply to situations requiring contextual judgments. The patterns found in

participants' responses included words such as (a) *document and reported,* (b)

*communicate,* (c) *zero tolerance, and* (d) *encourage positive behaviors,* addressing how

particular situations could influence ethical behaviors and decisions. Participants noted

*integrity* as a behavior that comprises the individuals' responsibility for his/her actions or

a thought as a whole is part of an ethical behavior. The category related to *ethics requires continued training* addressed ideas related to regulations, guidance, or law. Participants' responses included phrases such as *FAR/DFARS is a must*, *regular training must be conducted*, *relevant training is needed*, *maintain current training*, and *clarify policies*. Participants posited that making guidelines and regulations clear could assist government contracting managers to clearly relate ethical guidelines to government contracting employees.

## Application to Professional Practice

The findings from this study indicated a vital need for additional government contracting managers' training and guidance in mitigating unethical behaviors by employees administering government contracts. The threat of increased unethical behaviors by government contracting employees coupled with the stated need for simplification and clarification of government contracting regulations support Demessie's (2012) conclusion that vagueness in procurement policies can affect all stakeholders. The findings relate to stakeholder theory because as identified by D1 in the second theme, government contracting organizations can establish trust through engagement with all stakeholders.

Freeman (1984) posited that moral principles must drive stakeholder relations. Government contracting managers must guide their employees in understanding how unethical behaviors affect not only the organization but also all stakeholders. The ethical principles of government contracting business as defined in the FAR as well as outlined in D1 can provide government contracting organizations with better performance

approaches if managers know how to ethically manage employees. The ability of government contracting managers to mitigate employees' unethical behaviors will benefit not only this organization but also all stakeholders.

To some extent, the findings of this study suggested that unethical behaviors by government contracting employees may be consistent with lack of information provided by government contracting managers. Lorne and Dilling (2012) posited that managers require purposeful decision making tools to facilitate dissemination of information. If government contracting managers do not have clear guidance and training in understanding government contracting ethical requirements, the managers cannot provide that information to employees. On the other hand, if policies, regulations, and guidance are unclear, managers will provide personal interpretations to individual employees. There must be clarity and consistency through the government contracting arena.

Implementing the views assessed in this study have important implications for government contracting because, as suggested by P1, P5, P6, P13, P14 and P16, all stakeholders can benefit from ethical government contracting through improved customer service and increased cost savings. Improving customer service can show stakeholders and society improvement in the ethical culture of government contracting. P2 suggested that mitigating government contracting employees' unethical behaviors might mitigate scandals currently plaguing government contracting organizations (Schick, 2011). When government contracting managers understand the requirements of ethical government contracting and how to disseminate the information to their employees, employees might consider the consequences of their actions before making a decision to be unethical. As

government contracting managers understand ethical needs of government contracting, the result of this study may assist organization leaders in developing strategies for improved implementation of ethical requirements.

## Implications for Social Change

Positive social change is possible within government contracting. Society, policy administrators, government contracting professionals, and acquisition workforces must make an effort to clarify and simplify the ethical requirements of the government contracting process. From the data analysis, I concluded that a dominant association exists among understanding government contracting regulations, organizational philosophies, corporate best practices, and government contracting fraud. Furthermore, I concluded that this association that exists among these entities is vital to the government contracting community because of insights provided by the training attitudes, expectations, and transparency needed with government contracting.

Government contracting professionals may benefit from this study by understanding the potential effect of unethical behaviors on all stakeholders. Understanding the role that each stakeholder plays in the government contracting process, and how the potential effects of unethical behaviors can affect each member may assist stakeholders in mitigating financial losses occurring yearly due to fraud, briberies, and abuse. In addition, benefits of this study may encourage socially accountable and transparent federal contracting processes that could reduce fraud that in turn may renew society's trust in government contracting organizations.

Findings and conclusions from this study are expected to expand the scholarly literature that demonstrates the benefits of socially acceptable government contracting processes. Any reduction in government contracting employees' unethical behaviors can benefit society because individual taxpayers represent society. Government contracting organizations may also benefit from increased ethical behaviors by employees because the organizations' stakeholders may see cost savings in reduction of prosecutions and lost production time. Businesses' leaders may benefit because the money saved by government contracting organizations can finance technology and innovations. Stakeholders can use money saved by government contracting organizations to incentivize human development thereby benefiting society. Findings and recommendations from this study may contribute to positive social change by improving training and ethical standards, which could lead to enhancing society's trust in government contracting organizations.

## Recommendations for Action

The findings indicated that some government contracting managers had the knowledge needed to mitigate unethical behaviors by government contracting employees; however, government contracting organizations still require changes. Findings from this study revealed dominant perceptions that there is a connection among (a) government contracting regulations, (b) government contracting manager and employee training, (c) trust, and (d) best business practices to mitigate the government contracting employees' unethical behaviors. Because of the findings, I propose three recommendations to both the government contracting officials/regulators and industry leaders.

First, I recommend that the government contracting officials/regulators seek to improve dissemination of ethical guidelines on a regular basis, thereby improving government contracting managers and employees' understanding of the ethical guidelines. Stakeholders doing government contracting business require clarity. If the guidelines and regulations are unclear, government contracting employees may not fully comprehend the ramifications of continued unethical behaviors. Government contracting managers must drive ethical and value integration. Leaders have the power to motivate employees by being role models (Leroy, Palanski, & Simons, 2012).

My second recommendation is that government contracting officials conduct a more comprehensive review of instances of unethical behaviors by government contracting employees. Conducting *random checks* to ensure that employees are doing the job ethically may benefit all stakeholders. Managers must have the tools needed to assist their employees. Conducting quarterly management training on the FAR requirements in relation to ethical conduct can help managers to understand the requirements for their employees better. Along with FAR training, I recommend that managers receive quarterly ethical training. The training can include the requirements for ethical contracting, ethics in business, and the effect of unethical behaviors on the stakeholders. Government contracting managers must offer and maintain relevant training that provides government contracting employees with the tools needed to do the job ethically.

My third and final recommendation is that government contracting officials impose penalties that will reduce misconduct. The FAR lists penalties for government

contracting employees' unethical behaviors (Acquisition Central, 2014). However, unless the individual takes the time to read FAR Part 3 inclusively, understanding the possible ramifications of their unethical behaviors may not be clear. Mitigating depends on government contracting employees believing that stakeholders might discover the acts of unethical behaviors and that the cost of the action is greater than the potential profit. I recommend that the government contracting administrators enable and empower managers to publish statistics of employees caught in unethical situations and the punishments for the employees' actions. Implementing these findings would support Sadler-Smith's (2012) finding that corporate ethics programs educate and inform.

The research findings will benefit government contracting leaders who have a goal of positive social change within the government contracting system. I will disseminate the results of this study through correspondence to G.A.O., conferences, scholarly journals, seminars, and organizational training. After applying suggested changes, government contracting leaders can meet with government contracting managers to review both successes and failures regarding implementation. Government contracting managers must meet with employees to disseminate updated information and review lessons learned. There must be checks and balances to determine if applied changes made a difference.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

Findings from this study determined that government contracting managers have the desire to manage their employees ethically and assist employees in mitigating unethical behaviors; however, managers need clear policies, processes, and tools to

accomplish those tasks. I recommend three studies to further the understanding of the government contracting managers' need to mitigate unethical employee behavior. First, I recommend a comparative study to discover if changes to FAR Part 3 have reduced the number of reported instances of government contracting employees' unethical behaviors. The results of such a study might further the understanding of mitigating unethical behaviors in government contracting.

Next, I recommend further study of a broader base of government contracting managers to determine the perceived level of understanding of government contracting ethical regulations. Within this study, researchers could address three issues: (a) government contracting managers' knowledge of the FAR, (b) the likelihood of government contracting managers detecting unethical behaviors in their employees, and (c) if managers can articulate the aspects of *deterrence theory* based on Qing, Zhengchuan, Tamara, and Hong's (2011) assessment that punishment for violations will surpass reward.

Finally, I recommend further assessment of government contracting managers' understanding of the knowledge needed to mitigate government contracting employees' unethical behaviors using a qualitative descriptive design. Researchers may expand on the current study by perusing a broader spectrum of government contracting managers based on multiple organizations and employees managed. Findings from the envisioned research studies may enhance the understanding of both academia and government contracting stakeholders on the association of (a) government contracting managers' understanding, (b) government contracting employees' ethical conduct, and (c) society's

need for clarity in government contracting. The expectation is that findings from this study may lead to enhanced future research focused on clarifications of government contracting regulations, enhanced training for government contracting employees and managers, and reductions in unethical behaviors within government contracting arenas.

## Reflections

Interviewing participants to gain an understanding of the requirements that the government contracting managers needed to mitigate unethical behaviors by government contracting employees was both fascinating and informative. Learning the history of government contracting, discovering various instances of unethical behaviors by government contracting employees, and the government contracting leaders' efforts to combat unethical behaviors heightened my understanding of the subject. With more than 25 years of experience in government contracting, I had preconceived ideas of what to expect prior to conducting this study. I initiated this study with the preconceived notion that all government contracting personnel understood the ethical requirements of government contracting and that managers had all the tools needed to mitigate the employees' unethical behaviors. Over time, I learned to bracket my biases and maintain an objective, scholarly, and unbiased approach to my research as described by Snelgrove (2014). The change in attitude proved invaluable in the research process and more importantly in gaining an understanding of the difficulties that each government contracting manager faces.

Completing the dissertation process taught me the value of applying structured and unbiased approaches to problems and challenges. The frustrations experienced during

the dissertation process from re-writes to waiting for approvals taught me that anything worth doing is worth the time, hard work, and patience that I experienced. I became open to exploring various literature on topics not previously considered, I learned to master patience and listen instead of thinking that I knew what the answer would be, and learned to analyze data objectively. My focus changed from an attitude of knowing, to listening and understanding. My lived experiences informed my point of view that government contracting managers are individuals who need the same guidance as their employees. Overall, completing this study significantly expanded my knowledge concerning government contracting regulations, ethical requirements, and most importantly, my awareness of government contracting managers' needs regarding the need for an ethical contracting knowledge-base. The knowledge gained, and ideas expressed by government contracting managers significantly contributed to this study.

**Summary and Study Conclusions**

Completing this study provided me with an overview of government contracting managers' understanding of the requirements needed to mitigate the government contracting employees' unethical behaviors. The research methodology followed a qualitative case study that included a purposeful sampling of 21 government contracting managers. The data collection process included semistructured interviews and documentation as research techniques to demonstrate methodological triangulation (Bekhet & Zauszniewski, 2012). My findings showed that most government contracting managers had not experienced employee unethical behaviors; however, those managers who offered an opinion provided specific examples of issues that the government

contracting managers face in mitigating employees' unethical behaviors. Most of the participants understood the mandate to incorporate codes of ethics into government contracting. Based on established guidelines, participants articulated that ethics is mandatory when conducting government contracting business. Universal principles and moral values must guide ethical behavior. Moreover, core values of honesty and integrity influence creating government contracting organizational standards; managers' interpretation of those values determines implementation of the standards.

Findings from this study show a desire of the government contracting managers to mitigate the government contracting employees' unethical behaviors. Deterring unethical behaviors can benefit all stakeholders. A multidimensional approach to ethical government contracting starts with the government contracting managers. This study is a starting point for assisting government contracting organizations' leaders in providing the tools needed by their managers to build and reinforce ethical contracting values. Finally, the results from this study showed the government contracting managers' desire to cultivate positive benefits to the organization, society, and employees; however, the task of mitigating the employees' unethical behavior remains.

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Appendix A: Research Instrument

1. What are the issues that you face as the manager of government contracting employees regarding unethical behaviors?

2. What are the fundamentals that you as a manager use to assist government contracting employees in understanding how to perform their duties ethically?

3. What are the elements of the organization's philosophy that you as a manager use to address government contracting employees' unethical behaviors when administering contracts?

4. What are the challenges confronting you as a manager in determining ethical implementation of the organization's philosophy?

5. What training and development methods do you use better guide employees to act ethically?

6. How can training and development methods be improved and incorporated as an integral part of government contract administration?

7. What benefits can result from employees' ethical administration of government contracts?

8. What further questions, comments, or information do you have that may be beneficial to this study?