

Drivers and differentiators: a grounded theory study of procurement in public and private organizations

Drivers and differentiators

Dolores Kuchina-Musina

School of Public Service, Old Dominion University, Norfolk, Virginia, USA

John Charles Morris

Department of Political Science, Auburn University, Auburn, Alabama, USA, and

Joshua Steinfeld

School of Public Service, Old Dominion University, Norfolk, Virginia, USA

Received 4 October 2019

Revised 7 March 2020

Accepted 19 March 2020

Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this study is to examine procurement professionals' perceptions of public-private partnerships in contract arrangements and to explore decision-making that takes place in the contracting process.

Design/methodology/approach – A grounded theory approach is applied to Simon's (1947) model of decision-making to better understand the perceptions of procurement professionals, especially because it pertains to public vs private sector contexts. The researchers collected data by conducting interviews and observing a compliance webinar of federal contracting employees.

Findings – The results show that in the decision-making process, Simon's illustration of a means-end hierarchy is applicable for procurement decision-making because it is driven by activities that are evaluated using aims established by the organization.

Practical implications – The implications are that, in the procurement decision-making process, a means-end hierarchy is driven by the activities that are evaluated using aims established by the organization. Essentially, the activities are associated to a mean, a mean is associated to a sub-goal and the sub-goal supports the main aim of the organization.

Social implications – This study supports the notion that training, information and procedures are a way for organizations to control behaviors and promote consistent results from their subordinates.

Originality/value – This study contributes by examining the drivers of procurement decision-making. Despite previous literature that focuses on practitioner discretion or emphasizes on socio-economic factors, this study highlights the linkages between practitioner decision-making and organizational aims and objectives. As such, the paper serves to illustrate the vital connection between procurement activities and outputs.

Keywords Public-Private partnerships, Contract Out, Public procurement, Decision making, Grounded theory

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

Since 2009, the US government contracting has been on the decline and is forecasted to continue to decline because of budget caps. According to [Deltek and National Contract Management Association's \(NCMA\) \(2016\) Annual Review of Government Contracting](#), the



top two states in federal contract spending are VA at US\$48.5bn and CA at US\$48.3bn (p. 7). The Department of Defense (DoD) accounts for about two-thirds of federal contracting at US\$87.2bn, followed by Professional Services at US\$75.4bn (p. 10). Other trends demonstrate that fixed-price contracts have remained the dominant contract type; incumbents are being dethroned; definitive and indefinite-delivery contracts comprise most of acquisitions, and general services administration schedules are decreasing. These forecasted trends in government procurement showcase barriers for many organizations whether that is a public organization or a privately owned organization.

Public procurement is an essential aspect to support the demand for valuable and cost-saving services. The goals of public procurement include reducing cost, increasing quality, timeliness, risk management, accomplishing social and economic objectives and maximizing competition while maintaining integrity and transparency (Pitzer and Thai, 2009). To combat these internal forces, procurement departments must ensure proper leadership, management and capability of the service. Due process requires time, effort and cost; thus, there is a tradeoff among transparency, timeliness and efficiency (Pitzer and Thai, 2009). In addition to these internal forces, procurement departments face external social, economic and political goals and challenges.

Contract development is dependent on the strength of the pre-planning phase and the strategic planning phase (Pitzer and Thai, 2009). Failure to have communication in the pre-proposal stage can result in negative consequences that hinder the competitive environment (Curry, 2010). If the planning process is lacking, then the request for proposal can contain features that encourage conflict of interest. This can lead to the proposal evaluation, resulting in a selection of a contractor that does not meet the requirement (Curry, 2010). Another consequence of poor communication is the perception of unequal treatment and ensuing possible protests. Note that legitimate protests can hurt a department's reputation, thus causing pressures that may encourage ethical violations, procurement fraud and conflicts of interest.

This research examines the perspectives of decision-making process in both public and private organizations by examining decision-making using a grounded theory approach. In this study, factors such as motivators, barriers, governing rules and regulations and relationship arrangements in public and private organizations are used to explore any differentiators that significantly influence an organization's decision-making strategy. This qualitative study applies grounded theory to develop a research methodology that derives theories of human behavior using empirical data (Lamp and Milton, 2007). Following grounded theory methodology, data are collected by conducting interviews and observing a compliance webinar. Researchers used constant comparison analysis of the data and allowed the data to drive the process of generating categories and theories with an expectation that a new decision-making process will emerge based on the organization's strategic orientation.

The following research questions guided this study. In the examination of the contracting out decision-making process:

- RQ1.* What are the drivers of contracting arrangements in public and private organizations?
- RQ2.* Can any observable differentiators be identified between public and private organizations?

Moreover, this study accounts for variables that affect the trends within these organizations to understand the full scope of the decision-making process. This study promotes a view of

the theoretical framework and its applicability by reviewing literature and gathering data from practitioners in the field. It also provides insight into the decision-making model used in public procurement and assess if Simon's means-end hierarchy is still a relevant explanator in today's industrial landscape. Ultimately, this study will provide a bridge between the academic and practitioner worlds by providing practitioner experiences and relating them to the academic literature. Higher education and professional development institutions can use the research to provide a toolkit to students and entry-level professionals based on a respective decision-making model associated with their organization.

2. Literature review

The topic of contracting has been gaining considerable attention because of the pressures of budget cuts and demand for increased efficiencies in the public sector (Jurisch *et al.*, 2013). The private sector seeks efficiencies and is dependent on competition to thrive, while the government is driven by budget requirements and resource allocation (Kettl, 1993; Jurisch *et al.*, 2013; Berrios, 2006). These distinct differences play specific roles in understanding public-private partnerships (PPPs) and the decision-making process each organization uses to decide if they will contract out.

PPPs are often conceived of as a form of principal-agent relationship (Kettl, 1993; Morris, 2007). The underlying logic is that the principal wishes for some good or service and engages with an agent to provide the good or service. However, the goals and incentives of the principal and agent are often different (Kettl, 1993), and principals must monitor the behavior of agents to avoid shirking behavior on the agents' part (Morris, 2007). Moreover, Shrestha *et al.* (2019) reported that the differences in goals and incentives means that risk allocation in a PPP becomes critical to the partnership's success. However, the agent almost always knows more about the specifics of the work compared to the principal (Kettl, 1993), which in turn results in information asymmetry (Cheng *et al.*, 2019).

These problems are magnified in a procurement relationship (Gordon *et al.*, 2019) because of the complex nature of goods and services to be procured by the government. Moreover, public procurement takes place in an organizational setting: public agencies (organizations) seek goods and services to be provided by private sector companies (organizations). The nature of the procurement relationship creates both the likelihood for a principal-agent problem and its attendant limitations and means that decisions to address these issues occur in an organizational setting. Thus, how we accomplish our procurement goals, and the decision-making processes that is used within the organizational settings inherent in the process (Ferguson, 2019, esp. Ch. 8), are brought clearly into focus.

Herbert Simon is known as one of the most influential scholars of behavioral studies in human decision-making. Simon's (1947) work, *Administrative Behavior*, applied economic theory to the study of administration. One of the main highlights is Simon's direct rejection of the "economic man" and the introduction of the "administrative man." His argument was based on the inflexibility of the "economic man" when applied to the administrative field (Barros, 2010, p. 459). The inability to integrate administrative tasks into the maximization of the economic man provided Simon the ability to distinguish his work from other behavioral theorists using psychology as a basis for his work. In his 1959 piece, *Theories of Decision Making in Economics and Behavioral Science*, Simon explored possible ways to integrate the two schools of thought in their application to the "economic man." However, his conclusion confirmed that integrating the satisficing behavior is challenging because of the nature of the businessman (Simon, 1979, p. 279). As much as Simon tried to move away

from economic theory, his efforts resulted in a theory of economic behavior (Campitelli and Gobet, 2010).

Simon’s application of psychology in the study of decision-making was novel at the time. His use of bounded rationality began to emerge in his 1947 book and further developed ten years later (Barros, 2010). This concept encouraged public administration to take notice of his examination of the decision-making process as applied to government. Simon (1947) proclaimed that “decision making is the heart of administration, and that the vocabulary of administrative theory must be derived from the logic and psychology of human choice” (p. xi).

The decision-making model developed by Simon in *Administrative Behavior* is presented in Figure 1. This model comprises three steps: intelligence, design and choice (Simon, 1947). The first step, *intelligence*, deals with problem identification and data collection about that problem (1947, pp. 122-124). The second step, *design*, is related to the generation of possible alternatives (1947, pp. 124-126). The last step, *choice*, is where the decision-maker selects the best solution based on the alternatives selected in the previous step (1947, pp. 126-127). This last step is the point at which satisficing occurs, and is the key differentiator between the “administrative man” and the “economic man” concepts discussed earlier (Simon, 1947). Some challenges the model faces include information asymmetry, which is expected because it is a direct result of the relationship between principal and agent.

Simon’s application is directly correlated to effective goal-setting, which is generally used to increase efficiency and effectiveness in an organization. Based on numerous studies, goal setting is successful with individuals who are provided with specific, challenging and yet attainable goals (Lunenburg, 2011). This assessment is consistent with Simon’s remedy. By having measurable goals, monitoring efforts can become more streamlined, thus avoiding unfavorable conditions in which monitoring behaviors become cumbersome. This results in trade-offs between meeting the standards of the monitoring requirements and providing satisfactory performance.

The traditional contracting procedures, set forth by the federal acquisitions regulation (FAR), demonstrate a commitment to objectives regarding both efficiency and effectiveness. For example, FAR part 1.102(a) sets forth guidelines for the vision of a public procurement or contracting activity to be the on-time delivery of the best value product or service to the customer, in addition to building trust and supporting public policy objectives (FAR Part 1.102(b)). As such, the goal is for the customer to be satisfied in terms of cost, quality and timeliness of the product or service provision. However, in addition to fulfilling the requirements of the customer from an efficiency and effectiveness standpoint, FAR Part 1.102(b) prioritizes the maximized use of commercial products and services, use of

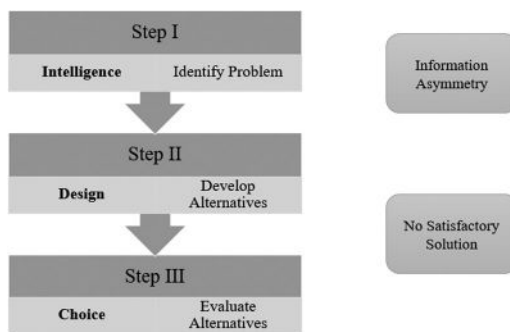


Figure 1. Simon’s model of decision-making

contractors who have a successful track record of past performance and the promotion of competition. Because of these goals and objectives of procurement or contracting action, FAR Part 1.102(c) stipulates that input is fielded from all participants in the acquisition process, including representatives of the technical, supply and procurement communities; the customers being served; and the contractors who provide these products and services. Thus, the objective of on-time delivery and best value for the customer may or may not be supported by these other goals and objectives mandated by FAR.

By reviewing the application of the abovementioned procurement process, one can detect a correlation between the procurement process in contracting out and Simon's model of decision-making (Figure 2: Simon's Model of Decision Making in Contracting Arrangements). Both processes apply goal setting as a remedy for challenges to decision and organizational alignment. As such, the procurement process can be categorized into Simon's decision-making model. Consider the three major phases of federal procurement: intelligence, design and choice, the intelligence phase will include the planning process of the procurement because it relates to formulating the problem that calls for a decision. Next, the design phase pertains to the bidding process of procurement (i.e. issuance of RFP). Lastly, the choice phase corresponds with the selection of the viable contractor to perform duties described in the contract. To ensure appropriate performance, government uses rules and regulations to monitor performance and hold contractors accountable.

3. Methodology

The methods serve to examine the perspectives and drivers of the decision-making process in contracting arrangements of public and private organizations and examine Simon's theory using collected data. Participants were selected from the Hampton Roads National Contract Management Association (NCMA) chapter based on their experience in contracting. The collected data provided categories depicting motivators, barriers and rules and regulations used as a monitoring system. While responding to the following two research questions, the data provided both evidence of properties that can be described by the drivers of contracting arrangements and explicit differentiators within the public and private organizations' orientation:

- RQ1. What are the drivers of contracting arrangements in public and private organizations?
- RQ2. Can any observable differentiators be identified between public and private organizations?

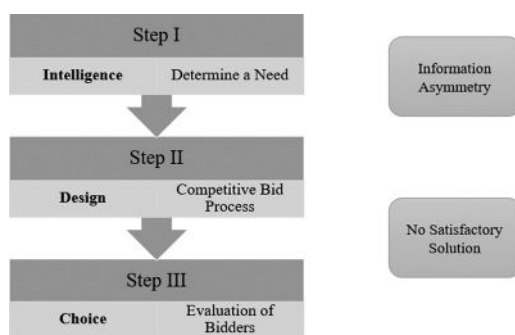


Figure 2
Simon's model of decision-making in contracting arrangements

For the data collection instrument, a questionnaire was developed to identify and evaluate potential participants in accordance with sampling procedures (Hays and Singh, 2012). The responses provided insight as to who met the criteria of having experience in contracting and established evidence of a decision-making role within their organization. The questionnaire gauged the participants’ professional experience and education to ensure a level of expertise on behalf of respondents.

The researchers reached out to multiple individuals with a goal of receiving responses for either individual interviews or participation in focus group interviews. The researchers received three confirmations for individual interviews and 11 responses for group interviews. Each individual interview lasted for less than 30 min. The focus group included 6 of the 11 respondents and lasted for approximately 60 min. To protect anonymity, the researcher assigned pseudonyms to each participant. Table 1 summarizes the responses to the questionnaire provided to the respondents prior to their participation.

The interviews were recorded using an Android app called *Voice Recorder* [1]. To ensure consistency in support of structured interviews, researchers developed a protocol document (Hays and Singh, 2012, p. 239). To prevent the risk of discussing proprietary information or a strategic framework of the organization, the questions were formed in a generic manner to prevent any inappropriate disclosure. To assess the data collected in the interviews in accordance with the two research questions, the researchers used a protocol matrix for each type of interview. This matrix served as a blueprint to summarize how each interview question pertained to specific elements in the study. The elements selected identified a decision-making process, observed common features in principal-agent theory as it relates to Simon’s model and examined the participant’s firsthand experiences. The protocol matrix contained the following questions that guided the semi-structured one-to-one interviews and focus groups.

(1) Decision to Contract Out:

- How would you describe your organization’s decision-making process of deciding to contract out work? Probes: Is it working – why or why not?
- Do federal guidelines and reports portray the process and experience? Probes: Can you name some governing regulations that you must adhere to?
- What resources are available to you to support the process?
- What are some barriers that you must overcome?
- What are some motivators that cause your organization to contract out services?

(2) Perception of Effectiveness of Privatization in Contracting:

Pseudonym	Age	Edu.	YOE	Org size (M)	Emplr	Mgmt l.level
Bobbi	<35	Master’s	5–9	>\$500	Other	Supervisor
Bea	45–54	Master’s	20–29	\$11-\$100	Gov. K	Manager
Blanche	45–54	Master’s	20–29	>\$500	Fed.Gov.	Exp. Staff
Crystal	45–54	Master’s	5–9	\$101-\$500	Gov. K	Exp. Staff
Clyde	55+	Master’s	30+	>\$500	Gov. K	Executive
Chris	55+	Master’s	<5	>\$500	Fed.Gov.	Exp. Staff
Charles	35–44	Master’s	5–9	\$11-\$100	Gov. K	Exp. Staff
Connor	45–54	Master’s	10–19	>\$500	Gov. K	Exp. Staff
Cole	45–54	Master’s	5–9	\$101-\$500	Gov. K	Manager

Table 1.
Interview participant
profile summary

-
- How would you describe your overall satisfaction of the industry and its effectiveness?

Once the interviews and focus groups were determined, the data were collected and reviewed for accuracy; the researchers then used the methodology as prescribed by [Glaser and Strauss \(1967\)](#) required for theory generation. This methodology is divided into comparative analysis, coding and theory generation. In grounded theory research, the process of constant comparative analysis is critical. This enables the researchers to be constantly engaged to absorb the categories as they emerge. Once the data are collected, the researchers must focus on extracting information that is meaningful. This process involves selecting, simplifying and extracting categories and patterns from notes, transcripts and other sources ([Miles and Huberman, 1994](#)). To accomplish the first phase, the researchers transcribed the recorded interviews and saved them in Microsoft Word documents. Using the electronic transcripts, the researchers included any field notes taken to highlight major points. The researchers manually reviewed the transcripts to report any reoccurring categories and patterns. The researchers used key phrases and words noted in the field notes and added them to the pool of keywords and phrases that were being collected in tables for ease of reference. These results were then used to code the data in the initial coding analysis and provide insight into categories that applied to each set of data. The researchers then used three phases of coding prevalent in grounded theory research: open coding, axial coding and selective coding ([Corbin and Strauss, 1990, 2008](#)). These levels allow the researchers to transform the raw data by data reduction and ensuring reliability in coding methods.

This study analyzed the first coding phase via *initial coding* ([Saldana, 2009](#)). The first cycle coding method gave the study keywords and key phrases to analyze through open codes. These phrases are known to be consistent in industry practice or jargon such as *performance, budget cuts, requirements, FAR, cost estimating, incentives, approvals, public laws, competition* and *preferences*. Specific attention to responses involving these recognized factors was analyzed for commonalities. The logic is that these factors formed the foundation for decision-making in contracting arrangements if they were identified as such via data collection. They should therefore serve as bases for an analysis determining the drivers (RQ #1) and differentiators (RQ #2). After the first cycle coding was complete, the responses were categorized to begin generating an assessment of consistencies among the data that were collected. In this phase, the raw data is coded from the interview transcripts and then recorded as *evidence from the data* that serves as points for analyses.

The second coding process used was *axial coding*, which was used because it allowed researchers to develop and explain major categories within the data and provide a platform to develop frameworks and processes ([Saldana, 2009](#), p. 159). In grounded theory, the organizing scheme of data includes:

- *conditions*, the circumstances that form the structure;
- *actions/interactions*, participant's responses to issues or events; and
- *consequences*, outcomes of these actions and interactions ([Strauss and Corbin, 1998](#)).

For this purpose, organizational properties were derived from data that reflect the important considerations that the organization must manage. When broadening these properties in broader groupings, they reflect a unit of analysis that could surface as a driver in the process. The axial coding methodology then serves to address the first research question.

The final process of *selective coding* is applied to answer the second research question and is typically used to generate a unified core category ([Corbin and Strauss, 1990](#)) because

it is applicable here. This category is used to represent the central phenomena of the study, thus addressing Simon's means-end theory. As studies progresses, selective coding moves the data collection towards theory examination. The final phase in a coding schema comprises the process to generate theory (Corbin and Strauss, 1990). This is performed by analyzing the categories developed by applying the grounded theory approach achieved from axial coding in classifying the categories of properties in contracting arrangements into data schemes reflecting a process orientation, i.e. to test Simon's theoretical model, a process-based approach is warranted and is achieved by the environment governing contracting arrangements for both sectors. This step comprises drawing conclusions based on cross-case data displays whereby the categories grouping the properties derived from the data are modeled to test an existing theory. By comparing categories or linking properties from each category together, a process-based technique can be considered because actionable items are combined into practice.

4. Findings

The findings result in addressing the research questions dealing with public and private organizations dealing in contracting arrangements. A qualitative analysis of the interview and focus group participants' responses demonstrate that the following four categories illustrate drivers in contract arrangements as reported by practitioners:

- (1) organization's guiding decision process;
- (2) monitoring techniques implemented;
- (3) observed barriers; and
- (4) observed motivators

Table 2 demonstrates these categories. Keywords were extracted from the interviews with associated properties generated using the aforementioned methodology (Table 2). Further analysis resulted in categorical groupings by operationalizing properties of the evidence and relating it to procurement actions actually taken by the respondents in their organizations.

The first research question is addressed by examining evidence in Table 2, as extracted from the respondent quotes, which illustrates the consistencies among responses. In particular, the following research question is addressed through a systematic process of evaluating responses according to properties for which keywords could be operationalized. The first research question is what are the drivers of contracting arrangements in public and private organizations and it is answered by highlighting respondent quotes as summary statements for the participant pool, thus resulting in properties inherent to identifiable actions affecting contracting arrangements. These properties are then described according to groupings that reflect drivers corresponding to identified properties in contracting arrangements (Table 3). The drivers describe important elements of procurement in dictating the properties of work that are being identified as core to practitioners' interaction with contracts. The second research question, addressing Simon's mean-end hierarchy, is ascertained through clustering of the underlying properties into categories implicative of higher level functions, specifically those delineated by Table 2. To summarize, the categories can be described further, which points to the second research question geared toward Simon's thesis.

The following four categories described include quotations from the participants to allow the reader to reflect on the participant's responses because it relates to the results, which are presented so as to be situated in the context of practice and report the data as analyzed.

Drivers and differentiators

Categories	Properties	Evidence from the Data
Organization's guiding decision process <i>core category</i>	Organizational need Having minimal risk and positive outcome Driven by motivators, Barriers Dictated by Federal Rules and Regulations Available manpower Scope of work Procurement Process	Past performance Cost Strategic partnerships Budget cuts Planning phase Acquisition functions Acquisition procedures Contract requirements Special contract provisions to procure services
Monitoring techniques implemented <i>the conditions</i>	FAR DFAR A-76 Process Congressional laws CAS Ensuring compliance with all applicable regulations Being obedient Having an agreement Reporting requirements Using appropriate systems and guidelines Avoiding penalties	Non-displacement of qualified workers Davis-Bacon Act FAR part 15 A-76 process Certified Purchasing System Cost Accounting Standards (CAS) DFARS Congress Public laws Cost estimating Estimating system Price competition Adequate price competition Commercial items Preference for commercial
Observed barriers <i>the consequences</i>	Unqualified procurement personnel Customer directed hiring Resistance to innovation Procedural barriers Incentives in public sector Understanding of requirement Planning dist. Of work Subs and Vendors Noncompliance Providing the appropriate data to the government	Customer directive Inertia Resistance to new ideas and approaches Size Getting the approval passed Incentives Educate the CORs and COs on the requirement Requirement Certified cost or pricing data Fair and reasonable price
Observed motivators <i>the actions</i>	Manpower availability Budget Capability to perform Preference Programs Incentive in private sector	Price Past Performance Strategic Relationships Wanted to grow

Table 2.
Categories in contract arrangements in Public-Private partnerships

4.1 Organization's guiding decision-making process

The decision-making process begins with a requirement or evaluation of the requirement. Next, organizations review any motivators or barriers that would drive them to proceed with decision-making. At times, this decision is dictated by federal regulations or specific requirements enacted by governing statutes. The organization must then assess the scope of work, resources required, associated risks and any benefits. Depending on the organization's decision model, the starting point for public and private organizations may differ. Respondent "Chris" explains that from public organization's perspective "the budgeting

process [...] drives government activities to seek efficiencies.” Budgeting and cost type factors are the most highlighted motivators for organizations when deciding to proceed to contracting out. “Blanche” expands on the decision-making process by referring to the ineffectiveness of the budget process to fund acquired services, which is “provided on an incremental basis, which means more modifications are required to add to the funding. This causes more work on industry and government officials alike.” Thus, the political environment and its decisions pertaining to budget can considerably affect contracting actions for public organizations.

For the private sector, “Connor” states that the process “starts with the scope of work itself.” This entails the manpower requirements and if the company has the resources in-house to perform the work. If the company does not have that capability, then they proceed to seek subcontractors to fill those positions. “Bea” provides an example by discussing the Project Management Organization (PMO) impact on the organization and contracting actions. The “[...] PMO should identify what percentage of work we plan to keep and what percentage of work we will contract out during the planning phase of the solicitation for our services.” This percentage of work can be driven by the organization’s capability and preference program requirements specified by the FAR. Preference programs allow for disadvantaged groups to survive and grow within the market place (Pitzer and Thai, 2009) and improve the status of various segments of society and the quality of life for the citizen of the state. As “Conner” mentions, “if you’re a small [business] you have to perform at least 50% of the work.”

4.2 Monitoring techniques implemented

Compliance with all regulations is vital for private and public organizations. The Code of Federal Regulation (CFR) includes general rules and regulations published in the federal register by the executive departments and agencies of the US federal government. The FAR is codified in Title 48, Chapter 1 of the CFR, and the FAR governs the acquisition process. The Defense Federal Acquisition Regulation (DFAR) regulations incorporate the FAR requirements and specialize them to the Department of Defense (DoD). Cost Accounting Standards (CAS) are stringent and must be followed for the private organization to be awarded a contract.

As a government employee, “Clyde” provided insight to the variety of governing regulations by stating “[...] obviously we have Federal Acquisition Regulation, we have the defense supplement, DFAR, and then a lot of agencies have their own regulations as well. And there are scores and scores of laws and such.” The source of these regulations is “driven by public laws that are passed by Congress [...],” as “Chris” explained. He added “Congress

Category	Description
Organization’s guiding decision process <i>core category</i>	Budget process and funding procedure Scope of work and preference programs
Monitoring techniques implemented <i>the conditions</i>	Compliance with all applicable rules and regulations Use of appropriate systems
Observed barriers <i>the consequences</i>	Compliance with regulations Incentives for innovation Customer directed hiring
Observed motivators <i>the actions</i>	Manpower Budget Capability to perform

Table 3.
Summary of
categories

can pass a law this year and then finally will get implemented through the regulatory process in two years.” Because of the longevity of the process, the dissemination of the regulation can put many organizations at risk for noncompliance. “Blanche” explains, “too many regulations and policies are disjointed. Policy will come out in memos, but it takes a long time to update the FAR and its supplements where that info should be contained.” “Bobbi” touched on this as well, stating that it was “frustrating” when they did not know certain regulations were updated and their organization was not notified.

Moreover, these regulations govern how organizations provide data to the government. When preparing a proposal, it is incumbent of the organization to provide cost and pricing data in accordance with specific guidelines. The government is looking for private organizations to provide a fair and reasonable price using accurate rates and have the capability to predict future costs. The data accuracy is confirmed by previous submissions of that organization for a similar scope of work. Moreover, private organizations may be required to certify both cost and pricing data. The use of appropriate estimating systems and guidelines provides a critical advantage in the competitive market that includes open competition and competition based on preference programs. The failure to have a consistent process, comply with applicable regulations and perform an extensive review of organizational policies and procedures can result in dire consequences, particularly for private organizations. These consequences can include price adjustment/reduction, civil false claims act litigation, criminal prosecution and the loss of integrity with the government.

4.3 Observed barriers

Barriers in contracting include the understanding of requirements, planning the distribution of work, and managing subcontractors and vendors. Another barrier is noncompliance with an aspect of the contract, rules and regulations and any other applicable requirements. While rules and regulations govern the process, they become a barrier very quickly. “Chris” provides insight by stating that the “federal acquisition structure is a thicket of regulations that basically deters a lot of people who are in the commercial world from getting into government contracts because you have to have a Ph.D. in ‘regulatory-ology’ before you decide to get in it.” Among many professionals, understanding the entire scope of regulations that govern contracting arrangements is a known barrier from both public and private organizations.

The burden of compliance can cause issues when there is information asymmetry. “Bobbi” explained, “The process continuously changes. It is very confusing and frustrating when a federal or state guideline has changed, and we are not notified.” These changes can result in conflict with internal processes; information asymmetry can occur within an organization. For example, the contract manager may have a compliance issue when new regulations have not been flowed down by management. “Bea” states that a situation that she encounters is when programs use “subcontractors without following proper protocol.” If information asymmetry is present, the management of interdepartmental relationships can cause unnecessary strains if regulatory information is not disseminated in a timely manner.

Another major barrier is a customer-directed hiring. Many respondents that were government contractors viewed this as a significant barrier. This was closely related to manpower requirements and work structure requirements because they were extremely narrow in scope, thus causing minimal flexibility. This minimization promotes strict cooperation with the work specification versus providing incentive for the industry to innovate. As a government employee, “Chris” offered the following insight

[...] the government has no methodology for incentivizing *different* [modes of service delivery]. And consequently, everybody is arguably overworked and has no incentive to go out and investigate the *different* [approaches that may be employed]. So, we get stuck in a rut. Business as usual, doing the same thing over-and-over again and expecting a different solution.

This was a major barrier for public organizations and one of the ways public organizations may alter the competitive space for the private sector.

4.4 Observed motivators

Motivators in contracting include manpower availability, budget and capability to perform the statement of work. Whether it is to participate as a seller or buyer, these motivators are critical to both types of organizations. These motivators differently affect both public and private organizations. The scope of work was a primary motivator perceived by private organizations and their effect on identifying subcontractors using strategic partnerships, which are critical to winning contracts for the private sector because it is closely related to competition and past performance. “Connor” provides clarification:

I think ideally it starts with the scope of work itself. So, you know you’re going to look at your position. You’re going to look at your work breakdown structure and get your in-house resources.

The manpower structure is closely related to the strategy the private company is going to use and how they will contract out certain aspects of the job. “Bea” states that her organization decides to contract out work when “staffing resources are low or if our staff does not possess the necessary capability to perform the work.” For a public organization, motivators can include requirements that are imposed by the government. “Blanche” explains:

[m]anpower levels are capped by Congress, so support has to be contracted out. Also, deployments of certain active-duty personnel cause shortage of the support they provide at home bases in the US, so short-term service contracts are sometimes necessary to keep a [military] base running.

Another major contributor for private organizations to contract out is the ability to perform, particularly if there is a requirement for preference programs. “Bobbi” provides her experience:

[...] we must give a certain percentage [to SWAM businesses] if a vendor is SWAM (Small, Women and/or Minority). This increases the likelihood of the contract being awarded to a certain company over another company that is not SWAM.

Preference programs motivate organizations to contract out to help the economic well-being of disadvantaged and small businesses. However, certain firms can view these programs as a barrier to competition and hinder procurement goals for both quality and cost effectiveness. “Cole” provides an example:

[...] and then also sometimes the decision on the route we go is going to be a lot [cheaper] but it’s a higher risk because it’s a smaller less proven entity that we just started working with. You know it’s sometimes hard to sell that to the customer.

If the risk is too high, the organization may choose to not contract out.

4.5 Identification of emerging category relationship

Selective coding led to the development of core categories describing the connection amongst each category. The core category becomes the focal point for the researcher’s

analysis (Strauss, 1987). As research progresses, selective coding dominates the process because the core category is essential for generating a theory by conveying the theoretical purpose (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). By evaluating these categories because they pertain to the research question, researchers can use Table 3 as a framework to develop an illustration of the decision-making process obtained from the data collection. Table 3 segregates the description of the categories and provides an abstract view to answer these research questions. This table uses the responses from the four categories and identifies a short key phrase, thus providing evidence for the concept in the transcripts and providing evidence for addressing the second research question involving drivers in contracting arrangements.

Furthermore, using the summarized table above, the researchers observed a relationship among the categories. This relationship denotes a process that is highlighted through the core category. In grounded theory, the process is necessary for theoretical development (Corbin and Strauss, 1990). In this study, the process steps under study include three steps. First, the organization must review the motivators to determine the requirement to contract out. Once the requirement has been determined, the next step of the process is evaluation. During this step, any barriers and risks are assessed to determine if this decision is viable, and the last step is the execution of the requirement. During this step, the decision is made to contract out the services. This entire process is supervised by monitoring that contributes to either information asymmetry or to the lack of a satisfactory solution. Figure 3 shows this process below.

5. Discussion

To provide a more appropriate summary of the results, Table 3 is reorganized by categorizing the description based on the respondent’s associated organization (Table 4). Examining the table below, it becomes evident that there are specific attributes associated with each organization based on the respective category. The categories that emerge now provide a distinct portraiture of the decision-making models. Using the core category, the decision-making process and the four categories are linked to the orientation of the organization, thus providing evidence that there are key differentiators within the decision-making process to partner. Hence, the properties derived from the interview and focus group data in Table 2 can be described into functional drivers of contract arrangements. Yet, these drivers can be further examined through application to public and private sector entity decision-making (Table 4).

These emerging categories provide a requirement to reassess the process displayed in Figure 3 because the process includes different properties associated with these categories. Using Figure 3 as a template, a similar illustration is provided for both public and private

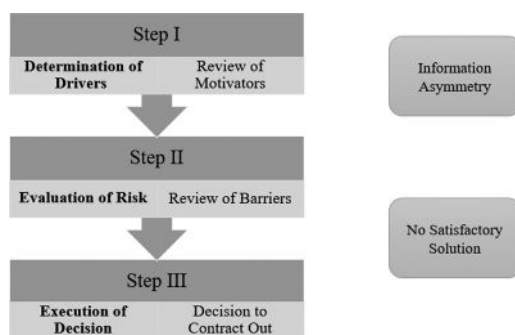


Figure 3
Decision process in contract arrangements

organizations. These descriptions are provided using application of contract and market arrangements for an in-depth description. In particular, the decision-making process in both public and private organization contracting arrangements is illustrated in the following subsections during the examination of Simon’s decision-making hierarchy as applied to procurement practices. In this case, the core category, i.e. the organization’s guiding decision-making process (Table 4), serves as the point of analysis because Simon’s model is process-based. For public organizations, budget processes and funding procedures guide the organization’s decision-making process, whereas for private organizations, scope of work and preference programs serve as the core categories driving contract arrangements.

5.1 Public organization decision-making process

Public organizations use contract arrangements to leverage private firms in providing goods and services. The contract arrangement in Figure 1 illustrates the roles of the government, private firm and customer. It displays the government authorizing and paying the private firm to deliver a good or service to the customer (Savas, 1987, p. 68). This arrangement is then further defined through the principal-agent theory, determining that government is the principal and the private firm is the agent. This relationship is illustrated in Figure 3. Although the arrangement and the roles are consistent with the literature, the collected data transformed the decision-making model illustration in Figure 3 into a more representative model. Based on the data collected, Simon’s decision-making model for procurement in public organizations is illustrated in Figure 4.

In reviewing this illustration, the process begins with a determination of need. The process of determining the need is vital to how the good or service will be contracted out to the competitive market place. The requirement must be appropriate to the need of the acquisition party and compliant with acquisition requirements and provisions. The terms and conditions of the request must be at a level of specificity that is appropriate for the good or service being acquired. “Blanche” explains:

[o]nce a Contract Specialist gathers enough experience; simplified acquisitions procedures are flexible enough to procure services in an effective manner. As acquisitions become more complex, so do the procedures.

To seek efficiency, public organizations develop a need primarily via budgetary requirements. Using his experience in DoD, “Chris” states that “it takes that needs act approach to the budgeting process to ever get the government to make a sourcing decision.”

Category	Description	
	Public organization	Private organization
Organization’s guiding decision process <i>core category</i>	Budget process and funding procedure	Scope of work and preference programs
Monitoring techniques implemented <i>the conditions</i>	Compliance with all applicable rules and regulations	Compliance with all applicable rules and regulations Use of appropriate systems
Observed barriers <i>the consequences</i>	Compliance with regulations Incentives for innovation	Compliance with regulations Customer directed hiring
Observed motivators <i>the actions</i>	Manpower Budget	Manpower Budget Capability to Perform

Table 4.
Segregated summary of categories

“Blanche” added “[...] the availability of funding determines the pursuit of contracting out. If the organization does not have the allocation in their budget, it is less likely they will proceed.”

The next step of the process is performing market research by involving the private sector to investigate innovative approaches. “Chris” explained.

[...] it was a common commercial practice [...] to talk to the consumers of those services to come up with and learn from their strategies and the way they approached the acquisitions in terms of type of contract incentives etc. And how they wrote this scope of their effort.

Challenges to the design step are evident in the last step of the process. Evaluating the alternatives based on capability can be stagnated by the approval process. “Clyde” explained that a major barrier to deciding is “just getting the approval passed through the legal folks, the financial folks, the section head, the next level head, and a third level head.” This leads to the same issues of information asymmetry and not having a satisfactory solution prevalent in PPPs.

5.2 Private organization decision process

Private organizations that participate in contract arrangements may choose to contract out. While applying Simon’s decision-making model, the private organizations’ decision process for procurement is illustrated in Figure 5.

The decision process of the private organization is driven by the scope of work issued by the government. “Bea” provides an example by discussing the project management organization’s (PMO) impact on the organization. The “[...] PMO should identify what percentage of work we plan to keep and what percentage of work we will contract out during the planning phase of the solicitation for our services.” For the private organization, the availability of resources is vital to determine if they will contract out. By contracting out certain aspects of a job, the prime contractor may use a subcontractor, temporary labor or use a vendor to supply the need required to complete a job. “Connor” explained that evaluating the scope of work pushes the private firm to evaluate “your work breakdown structure and get your in-house resources.”

Once evaluation of the scope of work is complete, the private firm must evaluate the alternatives, which was performed by reviewing organizations based on their past performance and acquisition procedures. “Cole” explains that his organization’s decision to subcontract is driven by “subject matter expert’s expertise within house or bandwidth.” If the work is not in the organization’s core capability, the company may seek strategic partnerships. The use of strategic partnerships was advantageous when filling the

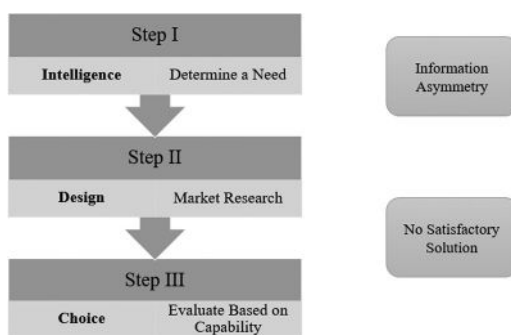


Figure 4
Simon’s model of decision-making in public organization contracting arrangements

requirements set by the government; however, as “Charles” pointed out, “cost is a factor.” As “Connor” summarized, making the decision to outsource is based on the evaluation of three criteria: “price, past performance, and strategic relationships.” Ultimately, the decision is based on risk because it diverts the risk to the subcontractor. As “Cole” explains, the company may “decide to outsource because it’s expedient and the risk is more on the (sub) contractor side to deliver.”

6. Conclusion and recommendations

The decision-making process to contract for public and private organizations is initiated in two distinct ways. The public organization’s process begins with determining a requirement while the private organization’s is initiated based on requirements set out by the government in the Statement of Work. Based on the interview data, the results ultimately support Simon’s theory of the Administrative Man who is led by self-interest, is only aware of some decision alternative and settles for an adequate solution while continuing to search for an optimal one (Simon, 1976). In each instance, the organization, whether public or private is after its own self-interest (i.e. public organization to resolve the requirements of the need and the private organization to identify the most profitable way to respond to the government’s requirements).

These decision-making processes *drivers* are illustrations of how in the decision-making process, the means-end hierarchy is driven by the activities that are *differentiators* based on the goals established by the organization. In other words, as Simon’s theory suggests, the activities are associated to a mean, a mean is associated to a sub-goal and the sub-goal supports the main goal of the organization. In application to the decision-making process, this is expected because training, information and procedures are a way for organizations to control behaviors and promote consistent results from their subordinates.

The strategic orientation indicated by the link between practitioner-level decision-making and organizational goals demonstrates key application to procurement practice and management. Conventionally, public procurement served as a clerical function (Pitzer and Thai, 2009) and the link between procurement activities and an organization’s strategic objectives was unclear (Steinfeld *et al.*, 2017). It was conceived that public procurement was a function that only indirectly contributed to an organization’s outcomes, typically via ordering and delivery processes. With increased complexity of products and services and expanding of contracting organizations, public procurement is recognized as a center piece of an organization’s success whether it be through the performance of procurement practitioners who generate requirements, technical experts who write specifications or test, inspectors and those administering the contract, personnel serving on source selection

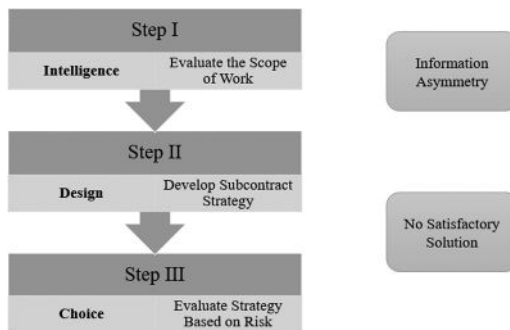


Figure 5
Simon’s model of decision-making in private organization contracting arrangements

authorities or requirements review boards, systems users, systems developers and managers of programs and projects. The results suggest that practitioners serving in roles such as these perform and manage their duties according to a strategic orientation that is guided by broader organizational goals.

As it relates to practice, the decision-making drivers emerge as critical elements to be considered as rules or tools in decision-making pursuant to the goals set forth by the organization. In practice, the separation between practitioners serving in the aforementioned roles is substantial both literally and figuratively. For example, engineers working in the field with a doctoral degree familiar with technical terminology may find it difficult to communicate specifications to program managers who could be stationed abroad and typically deal with a less technical workforce when it comes to systems user human inculcation (Steinfeld and Thai, 2013). Conventional wisdom suggested at some point that the outputs of various decisions across an organization were believed to somehow come together to generate organizational outcomes central to their core business model and activities. This could take place at a quarterly meeting or when particular program or project milestones are achieved. However, the results herein suggest that practitioners perform these roles along with organizational goals to an extent that the lineage between practitioner decision-making and organizational goals is fluid. From a managerial standpoint, managers can focus on various elements of the procurement and contracting process to devise ways that key elements can be used as tools to affect positive outcomes. For example, if FAR is an element being considered by practitioners in their decision-making and is found to be supportive of an organization's goals, managers can examine how decisions influenced by FAR can be made in ways that may better serve the organization's goals. This is an important implication as conventionally procurement rules and procedures were viewed as control, rather than potentially strategic, mechanisms.

There are certain limitations of the findings, however. Practitioner identification of key procurement and contracting elements used for coding may be dependent on prevailing best practices or narratives that are not necessarily consistent with organizational goals, but rather emerge from practitioner membership to the field, i.e. if FAR is continuously a point of discussion as work meetings, industry events or associational gatherings, then it may surface as a decision-making driver irrespective of its importance to an organization meeting its goals. Furthermore, as an example, FAR could serve as a more finite function altogether, whether it be akin more to a control rather than strategic mechanism or because of the emergence of expedited procurement actions such as other transaction authorities (OTAs). In the case of OTAs, FAR may be ill-suited to handle the complexities of products and services being contracted for both organizational and industry constraints.

For future research, a deeper dive may be taken into the drivers to determine what specific aspects are most important in determining successful procurement outputs that support organizational goals. If managers are to devise ways that will enable procurement actions to expand their decision-making, then the content underlying the drivers becomes important to know, understand and be able to convert to procurement actions. In this manner, practitioners will know in practice what tools are available in support of decision-making that is aligned with organizational goals. An additional survey can be administered that asks about the most influential or instrumental aspects for the drivers or if it were with respect to FAR, the most frequently cited clauses or those that have the greatest impact on either competition or price.

1. TOHSOFT. (2017). Voice Recorder (Version 1.3) [Mobile application software]. Retrieved from <https://play.google.com>

References

- Barros, G. (2010), "Herbert A. Simon and the concept of rationality: boundaries and procedures", *Brazilian Journal of Political Economy*, Vol. 30 No. 3, pp. 455-472.
- Berrios, R. (2006), "Government contracts and contractor behavior", *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 63 No. 2, pp. 119-130.
- Campitelli, G. and Gobet, F. (2010), "Herbert Simon's decision-making approach: investigation of cognitive processes in experts", *Review of General Psychology*, Vol. 14 No. 4, pp. 454-464.
- Cheng, Q., Wang, Y. and Song, X. (2019), "Study on principal-agent theory", *Journal of Social Science Studies*, Vol. 1, pp. 68-71.
- Corbin, J. and Strauss, A. (1990), "Grounded theory method: procedures, canons, and evaluative procedures", *Qualitative Sociology*, Vol. 13 No. 1, pp. 3-21.
- Corbin, J. and Strauss, A. (2008), *Basics of Qualitative Research*, 3rd ed., Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Curry, W.S. (2010), *Government Contracting: Promises and Perils*, Taylor and Francis, Boca Raton, FL.
- Delteq and National Contract Management Association (NCMA) (2016), *Annual Review of Government Contracting*, 2016 edition. National Contract Management Association. Ashburn, VA, available at: www.ncmahq.org/docs/default-source/default-document-library/pdfs/exec16-book-annual-review-of-government-contracting_lowres
- Ferguson, B. (2019), *Competing for Influence*, ANU Press. Canberra, available at: [131.204.181.24](https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108881241).
- Glaser, B.G. and Strauss, A.L. (1967), *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies of Qualitative Research*, Aldine Transaction, New Brunswick.
- Gordon, M., Morris, J. and Steinfeld, J. (2019), "Deepwater or troubled water? Principal-agent theory and the Coast guard's deepwater modernization program", *International Journal of Public Administration*, Vol. 42 No. 4, pp. 298-309.
- Hays, D.G. and Singh, A.A. (2011), *Qualitative Inquiry in Clinical and Educational Settings*, Guilford Press, Guilford Press.
- Jurisch, M., Ikas, C., Wolf, P. and Krcmar, H. (2013), "Key differences of private and public sector business process change", *E-Service Journal*, Vol. 9 No. 1, pp. 3-27.
- Kettl, D.F. (1993), *Sharing Power: Public Governance and Private Markets*, Brookings, Washington, DC.
- Lamp, J. and Milton, S.K. (2007), "Grounded theory as foundations for methods in applied ontology", in *QualIT 2007: Qualitative Research: From the Margins to the Mainstream Abstracts and Papers*, Victoria University of Wellington, pp. 1-13.
- Lunenburg, F.C. (2011), "Goal-setting theory of motivation", *International Journal of Management, Business, and Administration*. available at: www.nationalforum.com/Electronic%20Journal%20Volumes/Lunenburg,%20Fred%20C.%20Goal-Setting%20Theoryof%20Motivation%20IJMBA%20V15%20N1%202011.pdf
- Miles, M.B., Huberman, A.M., Huberman, M.A. and Huberman, M. (1994), *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook*, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Morris, J.C. (2007), "Government and market pathologies of privatization: the case of prison privatization", *Politics and Policy*, Vol. 35 No. 2, pp. 318-341.
- Pitzer, J.P. and Thai, K.V. (2009), *Introduction to Public Procurement*, National Institute of Governmental Purchasing, Herndon, VA.

-
- Saldana, J. (2009), *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*, Sage Publications, London.
- Savas, E.S. (1987), *Privatization: The Key to Better Government*, Chatham House, Chatham, NJ.
- Shrestha, A., Tamosaitiene, J., Martek, I., Hosseini, M. and Edwards, D. (2019), "A principal-agent theory perspective on PPP risk allocation", *Sustainability*, Vol. 11 No. 22, pp. 1-18, doi: [10.3390/su11226455](https://doi.org/10.3390/su11226455).
- Simon, H.A. (1947), *Administrative Behavior: A Study of Decision-Making Processes in Administrative Organization*, Ronald Press, New York, NY.
- Simon, H.A. (1976), *Administrative Behavior: A Study of Decision-Making Processes in Administrative Organization*, Ronald Press, New York, NY.
- Simon, H.A. (1979), "Rational decision making in business organizations [Nobel memorial lecture]", *American Economic Review*, Vol. 69 No. 4, pp. 493-513.
- Steinfeld, J. and Thai, K. (2013), "Technology advancement and E-Procurement in the United States", in Pomazalova N. (Ed.), *Public Sector Transformation Processes and Internet Public Procurement*, IGI Global Hershey, PA, pp. 58-84.
- Steinfeld, J., McCue, C. and Prier, E. (2017), "Professionalism as social responsibility in procurement and administration", *European Business Review*, Vol. 29 No. 3, pp. 320-343.
- Strauss, A. (1987), *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Strauss, A. and Corbin, J. (1998), *Basics of Qualitative Research Techniques*, Sage publications, Thousand Oaks, CA.

Further reading

- Barnett, D. (2012), "Constructing new theory for identifying students with emotional disturbance: a constructive approach to grounded theory", *The Grounded Theory Review*, Vol. 11 No. 1, pp. 47-58.
- Buchanan, L. and O'Connell, A. (2006), "A brief history of decision-making", *Harvard Business Review*. available at: <https://hbr.org/2006/01/a-brief-history-of-decision-making>
- Charmaz, K. (2006), *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis*, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Cohen, Z. (2017), "Trump proposes \$54 billion defense spending hike", CNN, available at: www.cnn.com/2017/03/16/politics/donald-trump-defense-budget-blueprint/index.html
- Cohen, D. and Crabtree, B. (2006), "Qualitative research guidelines project", available at: www.qualres.org/HomeCrit-3518.html
- Creswell, J.W. (2007), *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*, 2nd ed., Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Custos, D. and Reitz, J. (2010), "Public-private partnerships", *American Journal of Comparative Law*, Vol. 58 No. 1, pp. 555-584.
- DeCuir-Gunby, J.T., Marshall, P.L. and McCulloch, A.W. (2011), "Developing and using a codebook for analysis of interview data: an example from a professional development research project", *Field Methods*, Vol. 23 No. 2, pp. 136-155.
- Denhardt, R.B. (2008), *Theories of Public Organization*, Wadsworth Publishing Thompson.
- Ferris, J. and Graddy, E. (1986), "Contracting out: for what? With whom?", *Public Administration Review*, Vol. 46 No. 4, pp. 332-344.
- Fry, B.R. and Raadscheldors, J.C.N. (2014), *Mastering Public Administration: From Max Weber to Dwight Waldo*, 2nd ed., CQ Press, Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Guba, E.G. and Lincoln, Y.S. (1994), "Competing paradigms in qualitative research", in Denzin N.K. and Lincoln Y.S. (Eds), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, Sage, London, pp. 105-117.

-
- Janesick, V.J. (1998), "The dance of qualitative research design: metaphor, methodology, and meaning", *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry*, Sage Publications. Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Lane, J. (2013), "The principal-agent approach to politics: policy implementation and public policy making", *Open Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 03 No. 02, pp. 85-89.
- Latham, G.P. (2007), *Work Motivation*, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Larter, D.B. (2017), "Trump wants a bigger navy – but the navy wants its fleet fixed first", *Navy Times*, available at: www.navytimes.com/articles/trump-wants-a-bigger-navy-but-the-navy-wants-its-fleet-fixed-first
- McCue, C. and Pitzer, J.P. (2005), *Fundamentals of Leadership and Management in Public Procurement*, National Institute of Governmental Purchasing, Herndon, VA.
- Marshall, C. and Rossman, G.B. (1999), *Designing Qualitative Research*, 3rd ed., Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Martin, M. and Halachmi, A. (2012), "Public-private partnerships in global health: addressing issues of public accountability, risk management and governance", *Public Administration Quarterly*, Vol. 36 No. 2, pp. 189-237.
- National Contract Management Association (NCMA) (2015), *Salary survey*. National Contract Management Association. Ashburn, VA, available at: www.ncmahq.org/docs/defaultsource/member-s-only-documents/2015-salary-survey.pdf?sfvrsn=2
- Neill, K.A. and Morris, J.C. (2012), "A tangled web of principals and agents: examining the deepwater horizon oil spill through a principal-agent lens", *Politics and Policy*, Vol. 40 No. 4, pp. 629-656.
- Office of Management and Budget (2018), "A new foundation for American greatness", available at: www.whitehouse.gov/sites/whitehouse.gov/files/omb/budget/fy2018/budget.pdf (accessed 16 July 2017).
- Online-Utility.org (2020), "Text analyzer [software]", available at: www.online-utility.org/text/anaLyzer.jsp
- Osifo, C. (2015), "Public management research and a three qualitative research strategy", *Review of Public Administration and Management*, Vol. 3, p. 149.
- Prager, J. and Desai, S. (1996), "Privatizing local government operations: lessons from federal contracting out methodology", *Public Productivity and Management Review*, Vol. 20 No. 2, pp. 185-203.
- Simon, H.A. (1955), "A behavioral model of rational choice", *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Vol. 69 No. 1, pp. 99-118.
- Simon, H.A. (1959), "Theories of decision-making in economics and behavioral science", *The American Economic Review*, Vol. 49 No. 3, pp. 252-283.
- Strauss, A. (1978), *Negotiations: Varieties, Contexts, Processes, and Social Order*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco.
- UK Essays (2015), "Sociology essays - qualitative research methodology: Qualitative research methodology", available at: www.ukessays.com/essays/sociology/research-qualitative-methodology.php?cref=1
- Vasilachis de Gialdino, I. (2011), "Ontological and epistemological foundations of qualitative research", *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, Vol. 10 No. 2, p. 30.
- Wise, C.R. (1990), "Public service configurations and public organizations: public organization design in the post-privatization era", *Public Administration Review*, Vol. 50 No. 2, pp. 141-155.

About the authors

Dolores Kuchina-Musina is a doctoral candidate in the School of Public Service at Old Dominion University. She is a Contracts Manager at Acumen Solutions, Inc. in McLean, Virginia. Prior to that, she was employed as Contract Administrator at Huntington Ingalls Industries-Newport News

Shipbuilding Division (HII-NNS), Newport News, VA. She holds a Master of Business Administration from Old Dominion University, and a Bachelor's of Science in Business Administration from Christopher Newport University. Her research interests include federal procurement reform, innovation policy and decision-making models. She is an active member of the National Contract Managers Association (NCMA), Proposal Management Professionals (APMP) and National Institute of Government Purchasing (NIGP).

Dr John Charles Morris is a Professor in the Department of Political Science at Auburn University, Auburn, Alabama. Dr Morris' teaching and research interests include public-private partnerships, collaboration, governance and environmental policy. Prior to joining the faculty at Auburn, Dr Morris taught at Old Dominion University and Mississippi State University. Dr Morris has published eight books and more than 100 journal articles, book chapters and reports. His work has appeared in journals such as *Public Administration Review*, the *Journal of Politics*, *Voluntas*, *Publius*, *Policy Studies Journal*, the *Journal of Public Procurement*, *Public Works Management and Policy* and *Public Performance and Management Review*. John Charles Morris is the corresponding author and can be contacted at: jcm0143@auburn.edu

Dr Joshua Steinfeld is the Director of the Graduate Certificate in Public Procurement and Contract Management at the Strome College of Business and an Assistant Professor at the School of Public Service at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia. Dr Steinfeld's teaching and research specializes in defense acquisition; federal, state and local government contracting; professionalism; and public-private partnerships. Dr Steinfeld teaches cohorts to educate executives from the Navy and Army through completion of a course on government procurement and contracting. Prior to joining ODU, Dr Steinfeld taught at University of Central Florida and Florida Atlantic University, where he received his PhD. His other education was completed at Boston University (BS Business Administration), University of Denver (MPS Leadership) and Johns Hopkins University (MS Finance). Dr Steinfeld's favorite part of the job is teaching and supporting students to pursue their career endeavors.

For instructions on how to order reprints of this article, please visit our website:

www.emeraldgrouppublishing.com/licensing/reprints.htm

Or contact us for further details: permissions@emeraldinsight.com