

GOVERNMENT CONTRACT RE-COMPETE IMPACTS ON EMPLOYEES

Government Contract Re-compete Impacts on Employees

by

John Bergmann

Dissertation

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

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Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative, case study research project was to examine the impacts of recurring contract re-competes on the defense contractor workforce. The primary focus was on how these every 5-year events affected morale, job satisfaction, productivity, and retention. The initial research effort explored factors which motivate and de-motivate employees, described common attributes of defense contractors, and discussed the vagaries of the contract re-compete process specifically and government contracting in general. This led to development of a conceptual framework, identification of several theories to assist in explaining and predicting employee behavior, and the design of semi-structured research questions to be utilized during the interview process. Fifteen total personnel were interviewed, including line employees, contract company management, and government contracting personnel, resulting in data saturation for analysis purposes. Interview transcripts, as well as contracting documentation, were analyzed and synthesized to develop five themes and fully answer the research questions. The themes as generated by analysis are as follows:

Theme 1. Contractor productivity and job satisfaction are not widely affected by the re-compete process.

Theme 2. Contractors can and do plan exit strategies when faced with a contract re-compete.

Theme 3. Contractors view compensation and benefits as primary motivators in making retention decisions.

Theme 4. Recurring re-competes can have a profound effect on contractor morale.

Theme 5. While some contractors reported having limited visibility into the re-compete process, most think there must be a better way.

The conclusions that can be drawn from this study suggest that while contractor morale is negatively impacted by recurring contract re-competes, as is retention, job satisfaction only suffers moderately, and productivity is not affected at all, a finding at odds with motivational theories, but most likely due to the uniqueness of the defense contractor workforce.

Recommendations were offered to modify the re-compete process, including extending contract option years, increasing transparency during the re-compete process, and modifying the 8(a) small business mandates. Additional studies were proposed comparing defense contracting companies to similar civilian-based service providers with an emphasis on the attributes of the younger workforce members, as those are the types of individuals that will eventually age into defense contractor roles.

Keywords: contractor, morale, retention, job satisfaction, productivity

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Approvals

_____	_____
John J. Bergmann, Doctoral Candidate	Date
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Dr. Reshowrn Thomas, Dissertation Chair	Date
_____	_____
Dr. Jonathan Wilson, Committee Member	Date
_____	_____
Edward M. Moore, Ph.D., Director of Doctoral Programs	Date

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my wife and daughters for their enduring support and for missed opportunities during my journey of discovery. I'll make it up to you.

Acknowledgments

My sincere appreciation goes out to the dedicated and talented staff at Liberty University, from my course instructors to the ceaseless and timely guidance from my dissertation chair, committee member, and reader.

Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Approvals	iv
Dedication	v
Acknowledgments	vi
List of Tables	xii
List of Figures	xiii
Section 1: Foundation of the Study	1
Background of the Problem	1
Problem Statement	6
Purpose Statement	7
Research Questions	7
Nature of the Study	8
Discussion of Research Paradigms	9
Discussion of Design	9
Discussion of Method	11
Discussion of Triangulation	13
Summary of the Nature of the Study	13
Conceptual Framework	14
Concepts	14
Theories	18
Actors	19
Constructs	20
Relationships Between Concepts, Theories, Actors, and Constructs	21

Summary of the Research Framework.....	21
Definition of Terms.....	23
Assumptions, Limitations, Delimitations	25
Assumptions.....	25
Limitations	26
Delimitations.....	27
Significance of the Study	28
Reduction of Gaps in the Literature.....	28
Implications for Biblical Integration.....	29
Benefit to Business Practice and Relationship to Cognate	30
Summary of the Significance of the Study	31
A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature.....	32
Business Practices.....	32
The Problem.....	41
Concepts.....	43
Theories.....	51
Constructs	60
Related Studies.....	62
Anticipated and Discovered Themes	67
Summary of the Literature Review.....	68
Summary of Section 1 and Transition	69
Section 2: The Project.....	71
Purpose Statement.....	71

Role of the Researcher	72
Research Methodology	73
Discussion of Flexible Design	74
Discussion of Method	75
Discussion of Methods for Triangulation	76
Summary of Research Methodology	77
Participants.....	78
Population and Sampling	81
Discussion of Population	81
Discussion of Sampling	82
Summary of Population and Sampling	84
Data Collection and Organizing.....	84
Data Collection Plan	86
Instruments.....	87
Data Organization Plan.....	89
Summary of Data Collection and Organization.....	90
Data Analysis	91
Emergent Ideas.....	91
Coding Themes	93
Interpretations	93
Data Representation	94
Analysis for Triangulation	95
Summary of Data Analysis	95

- Reliability and Validity..... 96
 - Reliability..... 96
 - Validity 96
 - Bracketing..... 97
 - Summary of Reliability and Validity 98
- Summary of Section 2 and Transition 99
- Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change100
 - Overview of the Study 100
 - Presentation of the Findings..... 101
 - Themes Discovered..... 117
 - Interpretation of the Themes 131
 - Representation and Visualization of the Data..... 132
 - Relationship of the Findings 134
 - Summary of the Findings..... 136
 - Application to Professional Practice 137
 - Improving General Business Practices 137
 - Potential Application Strategies..... 139
 - Summary of Application to Professional Practice 142
 - Recommendations for Further Study 143
 - Reflections 144
 - Personal & Professional Growth..... 145
 - Biblical Perspective 146
 - Summary of Reflections 148

Summary of Section 3..... 149

Summary and Study Conclusions 150

References.....157

Appendix A: Research Approval178

Appendix B: Consent Form180

Appendix C: Recruitment Letter.....183

Appendix D: Interview Guide and Questions184

List of Tables

Table 1. Study Participants102

List of Figures

Figure 1. Maslow’s Hierarchy of Need.....	14
Figure 2. Herzberg’s Motivation Hygiene Theory	16
Figure 3. Lee and Mitchell’s Unfolding Model of Turnover.....	17
Figure 4. Conceptual Framework	23
Figure 5. Pentagon Workforce Spending.....	106
Figure 6. UEWTEP RFP.....	111
Figure 7. UEWTEP Protest.....	112
Figure 8. Proportional Coding References.....	116
Figure 9. Conceptual Framework	132
Figure 10. Coding Hierarchy Chart	132

Section 1: Foundation of the Study

This study examined the issues created when employing defense contractors who are subjected to periodic contract re-competes. Several theories on motivation, performance, and retention were investigated to determine the relationship between periodic re-competes and contractor morale, performance, job satisfaction, and retention. The Department of Defense (DoD) employs thousands of contractors in supporting roles to backstop the hundreds of thousands of active duty, reserve, and national guard members stationed and deployed around the globe. These contractors perform vital roles in assuring missions are executed to defend our nation and support our policy goals both domestically and internationally. The nature of their positions, as well as the required expertise and experience required to fill these roles, make them a vital element of the total force construct. Ensuring they face minimal turmoil during contract re-competes will minimize performance degradation and potential turnover, assuring retention of this professional workforce and continuing to support the nation's defense needs.

Background of the Problem

The Department of Defense is a vast organization, comprised of active duty, reserve, and national guard forces, operating across the globe in multiple countries and engaged in both conflict and cooperative activities. United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), which is a focus area for this research, consists of over 70,000 special operators from all four branches of the military, and conducts daily operations in 80-plus countries on six continents. Special operators are highly skilled, and require attributes such as adaptability, professionalism, competence, and innovation to survive and thrive in rapidly changing security environments, conducting tactical level events that often have strategic consequences. While special operators are the public face of USSOCOM and operate at the "tip of the spear," they are supported by

hundreds of government civilians, and thousands of defense contractors. These contractors provide many essential services, and work in various fields, including logistics, internet technology, training, records keeping, and intelligence analysis, just to name a few. These contractors are not government employees “per se” but are hired and directed by companies under contract to the DoD. Most defense contractors have prior military experience, and many have completed careers spanning over 20 years, often working for the same military organizations where they were previously assigned while on active duty. While much has been said about the high expense of military contractors, this normally only applies to contractors forward deployed into conflict zones; the average defense contractor is compensated at a rate commensurate with a white-collar industry position. Benefits vary according to the company holding the contract, as does compensatory time off and overtime compensation. The most troubling aspect of a contractor’s career comes from government mandated periodic contract re-competes, which happen on average every 5 years. Due to government contracting mandates, which reserve certain vehicles for disadvantaged businesses, the incumbent contract holder is often barred from competing during the bid process, resulting in undesired prime contractor turnover. This is exacerbated by additional contracting requirements which specify the type of contract funding, often forcing companies to tender low-ball bids in an attempt to secure a contract, while the level of services required to execute the contract remains the same.

A substantial number of governmental awarded contracts are reserved for the category of Small Business Administration 8(a) certified small, disadvantaged business entities. Such businesses are categorized by limits in size regarding both the number of employees and the size of monetary transactions and must be at least 51% owned and operated by persons holding American citizenry and considered economically and socially disadvantaged. These contract set-

asides may only be awarded to businesses meeting the 8(a) criteria, which can opt to bid as a sole enterprise, or in conjunction with a larger business partner, with the 8(a) business serving as the lead business for contracting purposes. Unfortunately, those same rules tend to discriminate against the 8(a) business during re-competes when the 8(a) is the incumbent of the existing contract. While winning the initial contract is a huge boon for the 8(a) business, during a re-compete, the 8(a) suffers as a result of its own success. The size of the contract the 8(a) has just executed now makes the company too large and profitable to qualify for disadvantaged status during the re-compete. Thus, the business' only chance to compete during the bidding process relies on its ability to sub-contract with a company which still qualifies as an 8(a) and can serve as the lead during the re-compete. Inevitably, a number of these attempts are unsuccessful, leading to a new company or consortium winning the contract bid, and causing turmoil within the defense contractor workforce. Even if the incumbent is part of a successful winning bid, there will still be turmoil among its employees, as the prime contractor will take at least 50% of the available employee billets, leaving a substantially smaller share for the previous contract holder.

Periodic defense contract re-competes can potentially result in detrimental impacts on the workforce. While retention is always an issue with employers, it can be critical when dealing with defense contractors, as the experience and training required to successfully operate in these venues is specialized and not easily replaceable. Companies that win defense contracts often rely on cost cutting measures to achieve a competitive bid. As a result, companies which have been awarded defense contracts often look to cut expenses in order to remain profitable. Both the winning company and the DoD need to understand the significance of providing sufficient recompense to retain the incumbent workforce. The existing literature suggest reductions in salaries can cause employees to seek alternative employment opportunities; the resultant expense

to hire and train new employees may more than offset the initial monetary gain from cutting salaries (Hester, 2013). The targets for reducing expenses include employee salaries, benefits, and often the overall number of employees. When a new company takes over an existing contract, employees may find their seniority has been erased, along with their vacation and sick leave balances. An employee who perceives injustice under a new contract, will depart for a new position regardless of the inconvenience associated with such a decision (Laddha et al., 2012). Employees seek a sense of belonging to a company's future with the potential for continued growth; this aspect is diminished or eliminated when the incumbent company loses the contract (Bosse, 2011). Another commonly observed issue is that a new company may not have the required expertise and infrastructure to execute a contract of such magnitude, leading to employee turmoil and management inefficiency as initial contract execution commences.

Employee concerns may be magnified by the bid specifications contained in the Request for Proposals (RFP). Government service contracts generally fall into two categories. One type, known as a firm, fixed price, sets an absolute limit on the amount of compensation provided by the government. These types of contracts put the full risk of performance on the contracting company. The other predominant contract vehicle is known as a cost-plus reimbursement contract. A cost-plus arrangement does not have a cost ceiling, which puts the onus on the government to avoid cost overruns, such as unexpected expenses due to government shutdowns or circumstances requiring excessive overtime compensation (Curren, 2015). Recent trends in defense contracting have moved more toward "best value" propositions, which allow a contract to be awarded to the company best postured to perform, even if it did not proffer the lowest bid. Unfortunately, as budgets tighten, this flexibility will most likely be eliminated in favor of lowest bid, technically acceptable type bids. Regardless of the type of contract arrangement, company

personnel expenses are calculated by taking an agreed upon hourly rate multiplied by the number of employees. Approximately half of the hourly rate paid by the government goes to overhead expenses, including company profit margins. As a result, the rate of employee compensation, benefits, and bonuses negotiated by the company has a direct impact on their bottom line and may not be dictated by the government (Post, 2012).

This experience of recurring contract re-compete can have a negative impact on the contractor work force. These challenges make the period leading up to re-competes a difficult one, potentially damaging contractor morale, decreasing productivity and job satisfaction, and ultimately causing some contractors to seek employment elsewhere. This study will examine possible detrimental impacts of periodic government contract re-competes on the defense contractor workforce and look for ways to ameliorate those effects, as well as to understand why contractors might react in a negative fashion during contract re-competes. One of the aspects to be examined is the overall employment experience of DoD contractors who have experienced at least one contract re-compete. Another issue delves into one of the least considered aspects of contract re-competes, the effects on employee morale and job satisfaction; examining effects on the potential for lost worker productivity because of contract re-competes can reveal some of the unintended consequences which ultimately cost both employers and contract customers. Investigating the impact of contract re-competes on employee turnover can expose the potentially highest cost aspect of the process as employers must hire and train replacements, creating reductions in service and increasing the cost of doing business. The final issue to be investigated is the underlying cause of the problem, seeking to understand the rationale behind the requirement to periodically re-compete Department of Defense contracts and why these types of mechanisms can cause detrimental impacts to the contractor workforce. The study as a whole

should fully encapsulate the issues raised by the specific problem statement, resulting in a more complete understanding of the impact of recurring contract re-competes on DoD contractors and providing a basis for addressing the root cause of the problem. While an abundance of literature exists on topics such as fiscal impacts from defense spending and causes of employee turnover, there is a dearth of information dealing with the specifics of this study.

Problem Statement

The general problem which was addressed concerned the impact of periodic Department of Defense contract re-competes on the defense contractor workforce, potentially causing reduced productivity (Bryant & Allen, 2013), possibly generating worker replacement costs from losing highly skilled workers (Hester, 2013), and conceivably decreasing morale, job satisfaction and performance. The loss of key employees because of contract re-competes can lead to work schedule disruptions, lost organizational and strategic memory, reduced productivity, and potential for a contagion where other employees leave as well (Bryant & Allen, 2013). The economic and performance aspects of recurring contract re-competes on employers can be substantial; it can cost up to 250 percent of annual salary and significant time to replace a highly skilled worker, during which time the customer must do without services provided by that contractor (Hester, 2013). Based on the contract type proposed by the government during a contract bidding competition, the award may be contingent on performance or may be cost based; cost-based awards often result in cuts to employees, compensation, or both, while required output remains the same (Bourne, 2015). The specific problem was potentially how and why periodic Department of Defense contract re-competes impact the defense contractor workforce at MacDill AFB, providing insight into the issue globally, as the Department of

Defense employs individuals across the world, and periodic re-competes impact defense contractor companies and their employees on an international scale.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to add to the body of knowledge about defense contracting attributes by examining the impacts and causations of periodic defense contract re-competes on the contractor workforce regarding the effects on employee morale, productivity, job satisfaction, and retention. Creswell and Poth (2018) described a case study as where an in-depth understanding is developed by studying a system bounded by time and place. This in-depth case study will focus on current and former defense contractors that have experienced the impact of a contract re-compete one or more times, with emphasis on the period immediately preceding and following contract award and exploring how this transitional period affected those employees. It is important to determine the true cost to the government, contract companies, and their employees, of awarding contracts to the lowest bidder, at the expense of retaining qualified and experienced defense contractors.

Research Questions

The causations and impacts created by recurring contract re-competes, while at least tacitly understood to exist, do not seem to have been studied in any detail. In order to fully comprehend both the short-term and long-term effects of re-competes, contractors needed to be surveyed and the results interpreted to expose potential or existing concerns and develop a strategy to mitigate the probable damage. The following research questions allowed for this data to be collected and analyzed to address these issues.

RQ1: What are the experiences of DoD contractors who must undergo contract re-competes every 5 years?

RQ2: In what ways and why might contract re-competes affect employee morale and job satisfaction?

- RQ2a: How and why do contract re-competes influence worker productivity?
- RQ2b: In what ways might re-competes have a significant impact on employee turnover?

RQ3: Why does the Department of Defense require periodic contract re-competes despite the potential negative impacts on the contractor workforce?

- RQ 3a: Does a potential lack of transparency contribute to any negative impacts that might be incurred by the contractor workforce, and if so, what are those impacts?

Nature of the Study

This doctoral dissertation examined the problems and causes of potential decreased defense contractor morale, retention, and job satisfaction created by recurring Department of Defense contract re-competes. Most government defense contracts cover a specific period of performance, typically only 5 years or less. When the service being supplied or project being supported is still required by the government (customer) after the specified period of performance, the contract is normally then re-competed, often resulting in a different company, or often a consortium of companies, acquiring the contract and its accompanying performance responsibilities. Based on variations among government mandated bidding processes, the contract's incumbent employees may face variances in their employment opportunities, ranging from cuts in benefits or salaries all the way to termination. Consequently, the period of time prior to a contract re-compete can be a stressful one for incumbent employees, leading many to question their contributions to the contract, potentially decreasing job satisfaction and morale, and possibly triggering some to seek other employment opportunities.

Discussion of Research Paradigms

My research paradigm is constructivism. Constructivism is a worldview or paradigm in which researchers rely on the study participants to provide their views and meanings of a situation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The constructionist concept produces a view of the research subjects through interviewing and interpreting based on a local context (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). The meaning or view of the situation is developed through interactions or discussions with the study participants, with the researcher eventually interpreting the meaning of this discourse to determine the understanding espoused by participants about the situation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This view is based on the appreciation that the meaning of an event or situation exists solely as interpreted or experienced by other people (Stake, 2010). How people endow events with the meaning each individual builds for themselves are seen as key to understanding their emotions, conduct and thoughts (Burr et al., 2014). The intent of the researcher is to interpret the significances of the study participants based on the subjective meanings they assigned to the world in which they work and live (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Discussion of Design

Case studies are appropriate for examining contemporary bounded systems through a process of in-depth and detailed data collection involving multiple inputs from a variety of sources (Yin, 2014). The study focused on current and former contractors that have experienced contract re-competes one or more times. Data collected during case study research consisted of interviews, observations, reports, and other documentation, allowing the researcher to develop an in-depth understanding of the problem, utilizing the case as illustration (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The inputs stemming from each individual participant revealed the causes and extent to which contract re-competes potentially impact contractor morale and job satisfaction, productivity, and

ultimately retention. The primary means of initial data collection was participant interviews, with follow ups conducted when warranted. The participation, unbiased views, and perceptions of study members, based on open and honest responses to interview questions, is a key factor to deriving information representative of the experiences of the group (Symes, 2010). Data are often gathered by the use of unstructured or open-ended interviewing, as well as participant observation (Fontana & Frey, 1994). Up to 25 contractors, management, and contracting professionals were proposed to be interviewed, focusing on their perceptions and actions during the event, and the context of how it has affected them, until the data reached saturation (Creswell, 2014). Ultimately, interviewing 15 participants, including 10 defense contractor line employees, three company management personnel, and two government contracting professionals, was sufficient to reach data saturation. The interviews were analyzed to develop the essential themes of the experience using NVivo software. The rich description derived from analyzing the data collected from those individuals allowed a detailed description of the case to emerge and the identification of common themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The data collected were measured using a flexible design, allowing for the form of the research to change based on respondent inputs (Burr et al., 2014). For this study, the experiences of each individual contractor, as perceived and expressed during interviews, formed the basis for understanding.

Case studies rely upon a variety of sources and variable data points, multiple sources of evidence, and prior development of theories which guide determinations on data collection and analysis (Yin, 2014). Case studies are often preferred over ethnographical research due to the difficulties encountered in obtaining the requisite access to participants within an organization, and the necessary commitment of time by the researcher to obtain satisfactory immersion in the field of study (Hughes & McDonagh, 2017).

A secondary methodology to be considered was that of a phenomenological study. Phenomenological studies result in detailed descriptions of emergent themes drawn from the processed data and based on lived experience and perception (Küpers, 2017). A phenomenological approach allows the researcher to understand the perceptions of the study participants focused on the specific issues identified in the research questions, rather than trying to analyze each individual's life circumstances (Symes, 2010). Determining the essence of the phenomenon requires the researcher to fully describe, comprehend, and interpret the phenomenon to distill its intent and meaning, while understanding that not all things may be understood and all meaning may not be able to be expressed (Loureiro Alves Jurema et al., 2006). While a phenomenological study would effectively reveal the essence of the contractors' experiences, this, while a shared experience, is regularly repeated at specific intervals, and would not be suitable for phenomenology.

Discussion of Method

The study methodology utilized a flexible design using a qualitative method; specifically, a case study design was used. This study examined the experiences of government defense contractors who are subjected to periodic contract re-competes. Qualitative research differs from the data and statistical analysis driven quantitative method in that it is based on observation coupled with interpretation to derive inductive conclusions (Cecez-Kecmanovic et al., 2020). The qualitative approach is also one in which the meanings that groups or individuals ascribe to an experience take primacy over data driven collection (Creswell, 2014). For the issues to be studied here, documentation and interpretation of contractor experiences and actions in the period just prior to and shortly after contract award were critical in deriving understanding of motivation and resultant behaviors. Utilizing a qualitative approach allowed for the development

of rich narrative detail and the creation of fresh insights and discovery, moving into new or alternative research methods (Cecez-Kecmanovic et al., 2020). This type of discovery and detail advanced new ways of seeing things and aided in the interpretation of contractor behavior and how they reacted to the stress of recurring contract re-competes. Most qualitative research efforts adopt inductive type reasoning, in which the researcher extracts statements or themes from the study participants, which can then be synthesized and summarized to derive meaning (Pearse, 2019). This method was appropriate for the proposed study, as observations and interviews of current and former contractors provided the basis for understanding their personal experiences based on the researcher's interpretations of collected data within the context of the natural environment of the problem being studied.

Quantitative research provides yet another method of inquiry, focused on objective theories and testing by investigating the relationships among prescribed variables (Creswell, 2014). While it provides a valid method of testing a proposed hypothesis, quantitative research relies on deductive reasoning based on data collected typically from instruments, based on experimental designs or surveys. Contrasting qualitative and quantitative research methods exposes the variations between the methodologies. Quantitative methods emphasize analysis and measurements of relationships between variables, as oppose to the qualitative focus on how social experiences are created and how participants assign meanings to those interactions (Flueras et al., 2012). The scope and nature of this study suggested a qualitatively based research effort would yield the requisite focus on meanings assigned by individuals and rich detailed understandings of the complexity encountered in social situations.

Discussion of Triangulation

Yin (2014) suggested case study data be gathered from six separate but overlapping sources of evidence and included archival records, documentation, direct observations, interviews, physical artifacts, and participant observation. As data are collated, sorted, and analyzed, patterns may begin to emerge, and a convergence of evidence may be developed utilizing triangulation, which strengthens the construct validity of a case study (Yin, 2014). By triangulating data from numerous sources and using it to justify emergent coherent themes, additional validity for the study can be obtained (Creswell, 2014). Triangulation can also provide additional holistic views and context of the subject of the study, and has the added benefit of eliciting data that might have otherwise been ignored or overlooked, assisting the researcher in a critical assessment of study materials and increasing the researcher's confidence while better imparting the findings to the study's audience (Huetteman, 1993).

Summary of the Nature of the Study

As this was a case study research project, the key issue was examining the shared perceptions and reactions of Department of Defense contract employees that have experienced at least one contract re-compete. After the interview data were coded, sorted, and broken down into categories, themes began to emerge to form a coherent whole. These were combined with other sources of evidence, including observations and other documentation to develop a high-quality analysis, and triangulation was applied to develop convergent evidence, increasing the validity of the study (Yin, 2014). Eventually the researcher was able to create a comprehensive point of view and reported the data in an account of the findings. Synthesized patterns of thought and behavior can form an aggregate revealing coherent patterns and regularities. Thus, the common perceptions led to determinations, which were then used as evidence the current system may not

be advantageous to the government, the contracting company, or the contract employees.

Moving forward, the focus of the study was further refined, guaranteeing that the study remained focused on themes of significance.

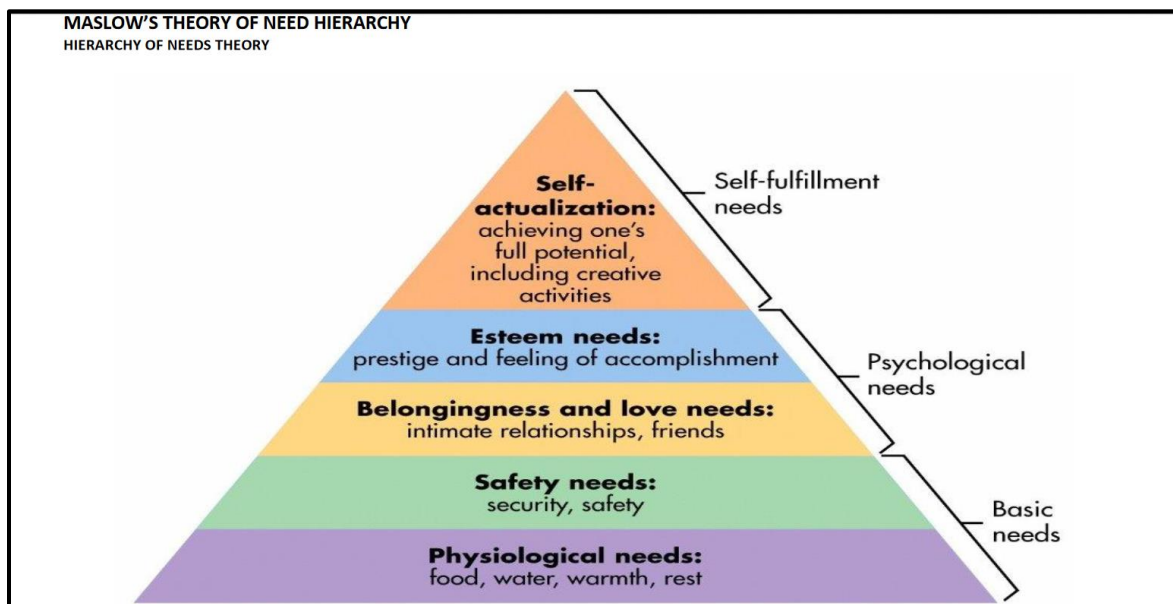
Conceptual Framework

Understanding the issues created by recurring defense contract re-competes required examining a number of different facets related to the problem. The potential impacts created by the re-compete process can affect employees in various ways. There are several different theories which helped to explain what motivated employees to perform, and in turn, expose what are the likely negative behavior traits evinced by unhappy employees. There were also several different categories of actors and variables that needed to be investigated to truly understand the nature and depth of the problem.

Concepts

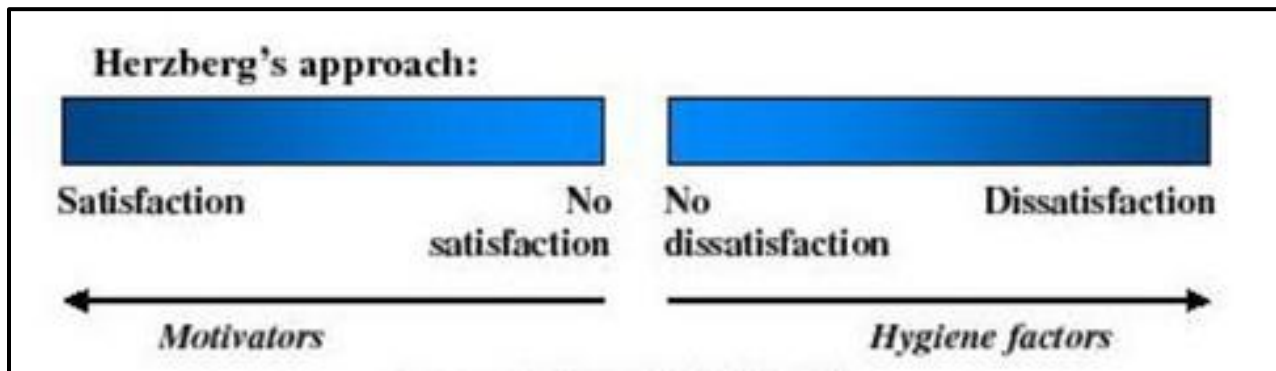
Figure 1

Maslow's Hierarchy of Need



(Jyothi, 2016)

Several theoretical concepts can help to explain how employees are motivated or demotivated and explain the ways they react to the stress and uncertainty of contract re-competes. Maslow's theory addresses five categories of needs, including physiological, security, social, esteem and self-actualization needs. For those employees focused on the first two tiers, physiological and security needs, salaries, and job security become the most important motivating power (Jyothi, 2016). Defense contractors are generally high performing employees with extensive experience and exquisite training, and normally operate near the peak of Maslow's theory, in the self-actualization realm. Upon initial employment, money incentives play a great role in meeting physiological and safety needs; however, once those needs are fulfilled, employees move higher along Maslow's hierarchy towards social needs and self-actualization (Jyothi, 2016). While the fulfillment of basic and safety needs tends to generate employee satisfaction at the lower levels of Maslow's hierarchy, for employees to become engaged and exhibit a high level of commitment to organizational goals, they must be assured pay and benefits are not under threat (Madan, 2017). When their livelihoods are threatened, they necessarily regress towards the lower tiers, seeking security from envisioned threats and protection of their basic needs. Understanding how fears about job security problematically affect morale, productivity, job satisfaction, and retention is a key component of this study.

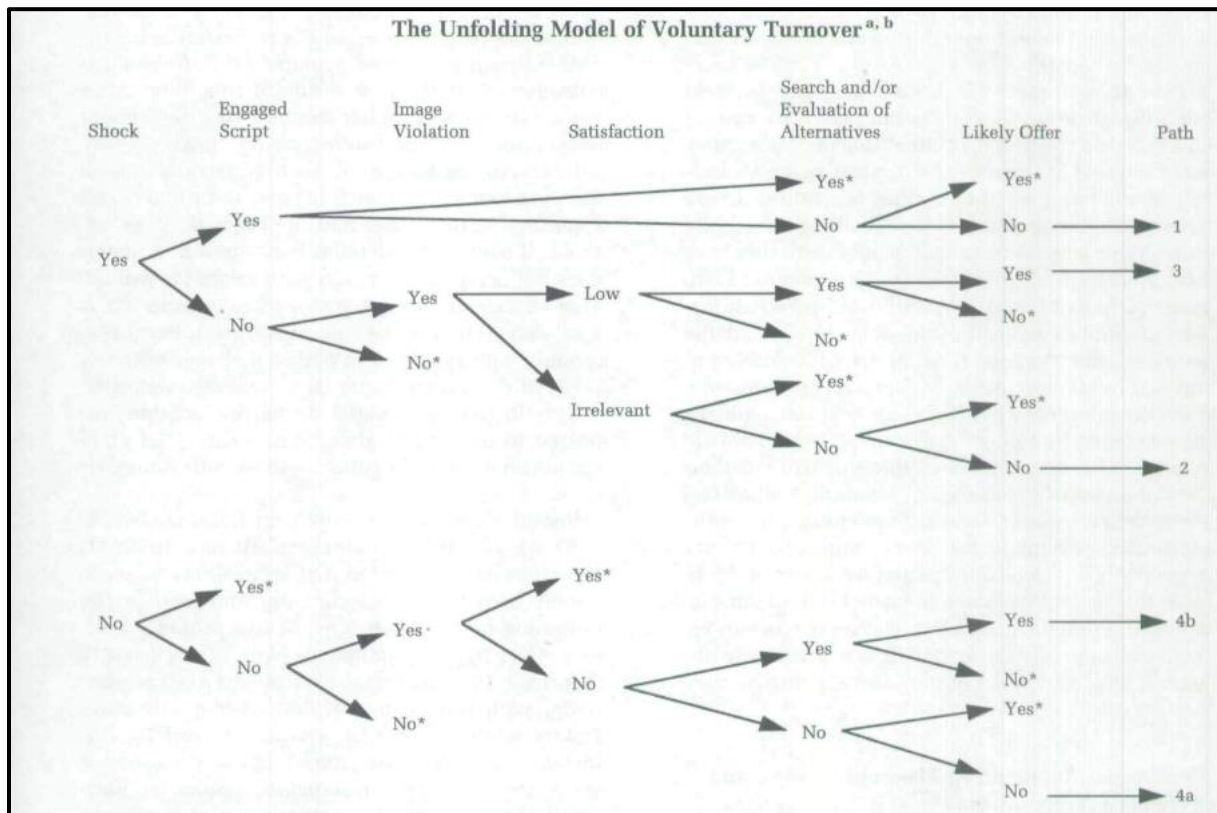
Figure 2*Herzberg's Motivation Hygiene Theory*

(Mustață et al., 2011)

The level of job satisfaction employees find in their workplace is impacted by a number of factors. Herzberg's Motivation Hygiene (Two-Factor) Theory divides motivating factors into two groups, one of which fails to additionally motivate and supports the status quo, while the other group includes behaviors that improve motivation. Positive factors (motivational) are considered as motivators, and include attributes such as increased responsibility, recognition of achievement and promotions (Tan & Waheed, 2011). When employees experience negative factors (hygiene), such as deficiencies in areas such as pay, benefits, and job security, they may decrease their efforts to balance their contributions to their employer with the perceived lack of organizational inducements (Hur, 2018). Job satisfaction is connected to life satisfaction, and satisfied workers are generally more productive and easily retained; dissatisfied employees have issues with absenteeism, labor complaints and unrest, and show a marked tendency to quit their jobs (Tan & Waheed, 2011). This study sought to understand the causes of dissatisfaction and how they might be mitigated during the contract re-compete phase (Mustață et al., 2011).

Figure 3

Lee and Mitchell's Unfolding Model of Turnover



(Lee et al., 1999)

Lee and Mitchell's Unfolding Model of Turnover hypothesized that employees who evaluate the possibility of leaving their jobs do so as the result of "shocks" that give them a desire to evaluate their current job situation: decision making travels along four different paths over varying periods of time and with differing results. After receiving such a shock, employees may follow a plan of action known as a script, search for alternative employment opportunities, experience image violations when their vision is incompatible with that of an employer, and experience lower job satisfaction (Lee et al., 1999). While job dissatisfaction can cause an employee to seek new employment, organizational shocks such as mergers, proposed layoffs, or cuts in salaries or benefits often lead employees down the path leading to voluntary turnover

(Holtom et al., 2017). A desired finding of this study was to understand what drives employees to take a path to fruition, conceivably leading to employee turnover as a result of contract re-competes.

Theories

Several theories describe how employees are motivated and what paths they consider when making determinations on how to react to employment stressors. These include Maslow's Hierarchy of Need, Herzberg's Motivation Hygiene (Two-Factor) Theory, and Lee and Mitchell's Unfolding Model of Turnover, which help to understand how and why employees react to contract re-competes. There is a significant body of literature which examines the causes of decreased employee morale, job satisfaction, productivity, and retention. What is lacking, however, is a comprehensive examination of the causations and potential impacts of contract re-competes on the defense contractor workforce; this study sought to reduce this knowledge gap and provided suggestions and recommendations on steps to modernize the contract bid process and thereby alleviate the negative attributes associated with this method. What is known is contract re-competes create turmoil in the defense contractor workforce, and potentially contribute to issues with performance, retention, and turnover. This study examined the gap of knowledge in how and why re-competes affect employees and offered suggestions on improvements to the contract bidding and award process to mitigate some of these concerns. As a practical matter, employee performance and retention issues affect not only the worker, but also the contracting company, and as a result, impact the performance and services received by the customer. This study added to the body of knowledge on this topic and contributed to the ability of the government to design and implement contracting policies which reduce re-compete

impacts with the potential for a resultant increase in employee productivity, morale, job satisfaction, and retention, benefitting all of the myriad collaborators in this endeavor.

Actors

The following groups and individual actors provided the basis for collecting the required data due to their experiences as contractors, supervisory personnel, and government contracting personnel during multiple defense contract re-compete cycles. Each of these groups provided a unique perspective, as potential impacts would be different for affected personnel. By collecting the various points of view, a more holistic appraisal of potential impacts was compiled, ultimately creating a more thorough analysis of the contract re-compete process.

USSOCOM Joint Collective Training (JCT), MacDill Air Force Base, FL. JCT has a large number of defense contractor personnel, most of whom have been through one or more contract re-competes, and some of whom have served in contract positions internationally. Additionally, the JCT contract management team includes a program manager, deputy program manager, and several task-order leads which can provide a different perspective from the management side of the process. This organization has been through several re-competes spanning multiple organizational changes and geographical locations, with the potential to provide a rich level of detail for analysis.

USSOCOM Concept Development and Integration (CDI), MacDill Air Force Base, FL. CDI also has a significant number of defense contractors as well as a task-order lead, all of whom recently underwent a contract re-compete. The CDI employment base provides a different perspective as the location and core group of employees has been relatively unchanged for a number of years, although they have also endured organizational changes. Several of these employees have also made the transition from active-duty military to contractor personnel within

this organization, which might provide additional insight into challenges faced by the perceptions of decreased responsibility and trust often encountered by defense contractors.

Special Operations Command Central Command (SOCCENT), MacDill Air Force Base, FL. SOCCENT can provide additional defense contract personnel and has a higher percentage of contractors that have recently been employed internationally and have experienced contract re-competes. Some of these contractors can offer unique perspectives, as they are frequently called upon to deploy overseas, including during contract re-compete periods. Furthermore, these contractors have been engaged in areas of active conflict, which give rise to additional stresses in their employment conditions.

General Services Administration, Region 4 Federal Acquisition Service, Robins Air Force Base, GA. Federal government contracting officials can provide a wealth of information on how defense contracts are proffered, bid, and awarded, as well as the different varieties of contracts. These individuals can also offer informed opinions as to the future direction contract bidding might take in response to budgetary pressures. They can also contribute to a holistic analysis of contract re-compete cycles as they negotiate multiple defense contracts throughout the annual fiscal cycle.

Constructs

Several different concepts need to be explored to clearly highlight the issues caused by periodic contract re-competes. One concept is the possible causation of decreased morale due to uncertainty generated by recurring contract re-competes leading to lost productivity. Studies have shown low morale and motivation negatively affect employee productivity and willingness to perform (Guclu & Guney, 2017). Another concept addresses the potential concern that diminished job satisfaction caused by fears of wage and benefit cuts under re-competed contracts

can cause employee turnover. This can be an expensive proposition, as cost initiatives, including restructuring, lead to heightened feelings of uncertainty and job insecurity, increasing employee stress and anxiety, decreasing employee engagement, and increasing the rate of employee turnover (Fletcher et al., 2018).

Relationships Between Concepts, Theories, Actors, and Constructs

While the three concepts share some similarities, there are also marked differences. Maslow's hierarchy presupposes that basic needs take priority over higher level desires; when employees are made to choose, they will seek stability and security over social needs and self-actualization. Having such a choice foisted upon them due to a contract re-compete can cause them to seek employment elsewhere. Herzberg's Motivation Hygiene (Two-Factor) Theory discusses factors which motivate employees versus those which only sustain the status quo. For many employees, the disruption which accompanies a contract re-compete could possibly provide sufficient negative (hygiene) factors as to make departing the company a reasonable solution. For Lee and Mitchell's Unfolding Model of Turnover, a contract re-compete can provide the initial shock starting an employee down one of the four paths, often leading to discovery and exploration which convince the employee that his or her future lies in a different direction.

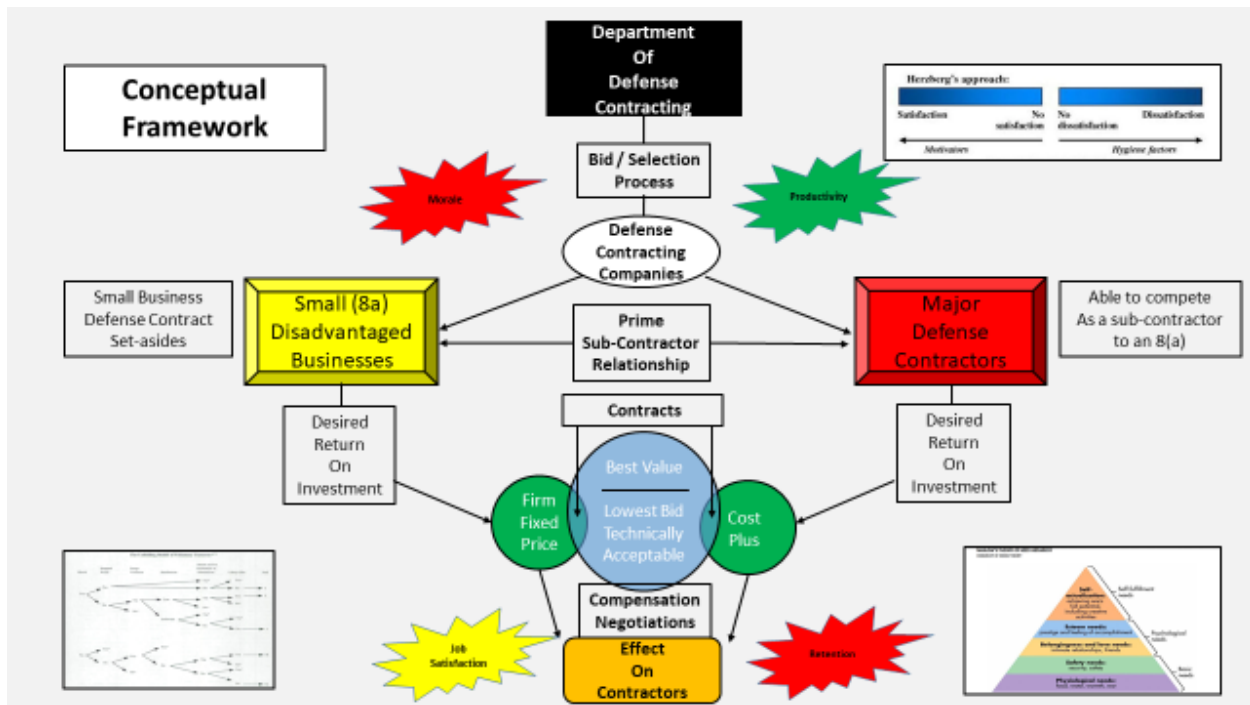
Summary of the Research Framework

There is an innumerable quantity of variables that determine whether or not a defense contractor survives a contract re-compete. Some of those are beyond an employee's control; if, due to a low-bid contract award the employer is forced to downsize, contractors may be terminated without being offered any alternatives. On the other hand, just the prospect of an upcoming re-compete may be sufficient for some contractors to consider changing jobs.

Differing contract vehicles can result in variable work environments in the future, all of which weigh on a contractor's decision to stay or go. Based on the type of bid request, certain companies, including the incumbent, may become ineligible to compete as the prime contractor, and be relegated to sub-contractor status, or be completely disqualified from the competition. Changes in company hierarchies in terms of contract execution may often affect what path an employee chooses going forward. Regardless of bid outcome, contract re-competes are potentially stressful times for defense contractors, and may provide the impetus for decreased morale, job satisfaction, productivity, and sometimes turnover. All of the previously discussed theories, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Herzberg's Motivation Hygiene (Two-Factor) Theory, and Lee and Mitchell's Unfolding Model of Turnover support the concept that the stressors created by a contract re-compete environment can be sufficient, under certain circumstances, to negatively affect an employee's behavior. In the worst-case scenario, this turmoil can cause a previously loyal and productive employee to opt to take his or her talents, experience, and productivity to another defense contracting company, or choose to exit the defense contractor field entirely.

Figure 4

Conceptual Framework



Definition of Terms

The following definitions are included to ensure clarity and understanding with unfamiliar terminology throughout this study:

Best value: All participants in the system are responsible for making acquisition decisions that deliver the best value product or service to the customer. Best value must be viewed from a broad perspective and is achieved by balancing the many competing interests in the System. The result is a system which works better and costs less (Federal Acquisition Regulation, 48 C.F.R. § 1.102-1, 2020).

Contract re-compete: A competitive process by which the DoD periodically (often in 5-year increments) renegotiates a contract award. The awardee may be the incumbent, a

consortium including the incumbent, or a new company or group of companies. Awards are based on cost, performance, or a combination of those or other criteria (Horan, 2010).

Cost plus fixed fee contracts: A cost-plus-fixed-fee contract is a cost-reimbursement contract that provides for payment to the contractor of a negotiated fee that is fixed at the inception of the contract. The fixed fee does not vary with actual cost but may be adjusted as a result of changes in the work to be performed under the contract. This contract type permits contracting for efforts that might otherwise present too great a risk to contractors, but it provides the contractor only a minimum incentive to control costs (Federal Acquisition Regulation, 48 C.F.R. § 16.306, 2020).

Defense contractor: DOD defines a defense contractor as “any individual, firm, corporation, partnership, or other legal non-federal entity that enters into a contract directly with the DOD to furnish services, supplies, or construction (Peters et al., 2016).

Employee turnover: The cycle in employment by which employees are hired, contracted, and subsequently depart to seek employment elsewhere. Turnover has both direct and indirect costs, including hiring and training costs, lost production opportunities, decreased employee morale, and reductions in profit margin (Skelton et al., 2020).

Firm fixed price contract: A firm-fixed-price contract provides for a price that is not subject to any adjustment on the basis of the contractor’s cost experience in performing the contract. This contract type places upon the contractor maximum risk and full responsibility for all costs and resulting profit or loss. It provides maximum incentive for the contractor to control costs and perform effectively and imposes a minimum administrative burden upon the contracting parties (Services Administration Acquisition Manual 48 C.F.R. § 16.202-1, 2020).

Job satisfaction: The condition resulting after hygiene needs such as compensation and security are met; this includes motivational factors such professional and personal development, achievement, job growth, fulfillment, and recognition (Skelton et al., 2020).

Lowest price technically acceptable: The lowest price technically acceptable source selection process is appropriate when best value is expected to result from selection of the technically acceptable proposal with the lowest evaluated price (Federal Acquisition Regulation, 48 C.F.R. §15.101-2, 2020).

Morale: The overall employee satisfaction derived from a combination of factors including adequate financial incentives, working conditions, intra-employee cooperation, supervision, security, recognition, and opportunities for growth and advancement (Baehr & Renck, 1958).

Small business (8a) set asides: A class of acquisitions of selected products or services, or a portion of the acquisitions, may be set aside for exclusive participation by small business concerns (Federal Acquisition Regulation, 48 C.F.R. § 19.502-6, 2020).

Assumptions, Limitations, Delimitations

Assumptions

The main assumption for this study is all participants will feel free to honestly share their perceptions of the impact of contract re-competes on performance and retention issues. Employees tend to reduce feedback when they feel it can damage their workplace image and negatively affect their employment opportunities (Qian et al., 2019). To ensure employees felt comfortable revealing their true assessments of these experiences, they were guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality. All participants were volunteers and were fully informed they may withdraw from the study at any time without cause and would not be subject to any

ramifications if they chose to do so. These are all highly skilled and trained professionals, at both the employee and managerial levels, and have a great deal to offer towards completing this study. It was assumed their contributions would provide the data required to accurately analyze the themes identified in the research questions and problem statement.

Limitations

A common issue with conducting studies is the introduction of bias. Having been a defense contractor, and having undergone multiple contract re-competes, this researcher needed to be aware that personal views on certain topics may be slanted. This required the use of bracketing, by which the researcher makes a sustained effort to minimize personal bias. The researcher also had to be aware of the equities of the involved parties, and ensured permission was sought whenever those equities might be impacted. These protections were incorporated into documents requesting participant involvement in the study. Finally, care had to be taken to safeguard the subjects of the study, making sure they were not harmed or marginalized for their participation. Identification of participants was masked to ensure anonymity and remove any potential of negative impacts. The study itself, as currently delineated, required further refinement to guarantee the themes under examination remained significant and pertinent to the purpose of the investigation. There were also concerns about accurately capturing participants' views on the subjects being examined due to the limited time available for each interview. Carefully crafted and refined questionnaires minimized the impacts of limited time. A relationship of trust was also developed to facilitate the type of responses which supported the study's goals.

It is important to consider the generalizability of this study as it relates to the defense contractor workforce when compared to the global workforce as a whole, and as it pertains to the

selected concepts utilized to develop the research questions, as well as their predictive attributes regarding employee behavior. The fact that these three concepts, Maslow's Hierarchy of Need, Herzberg's Motivation Hygiene Theory, and Lee and Mitchell's Unfolding Theory of Voluntary Turnover, did not adequately predict defense contractor behavior in response to motivational stimuli is most likely attributable to the contractors' unique backgrounds, lived experiences, education, maturity, and the environments they frequently operate in. As such, these findings do not invalidate the selected concepts' application to the civilian workforce writ large, but only serve to highlight the everchanging nature of the workforce as a whole and suggests that certain niche populations of the workforce are not fully suited for accurate prediction analysis utilizing these concepts.

Delimitations

This study was focused on defense contractors who have experienced at least one contract re-compete. Although this limited the pool of eligible contractors somewhat, there were still a sufficient number of contractors to form a large enough group allowing for a thorough examination of the study's focus areas. To limit personal bias, the researcher used a process known as bracketing. Successful bracketing results from the researcher recognizing and setting aside any pre-judgmental biases and attempting to view the participating subjects through a completely unbiased lens (Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004). Due to limits of available time for both the researcher and subjects, as well as the labor required for transcription and analysis of interviews, interview questions were required to be carefully scripted to reveal the essence of the experiences within the allotted timeframe. All participants were fully informed of the nature and limitations of the study. To avoid potential harm to research subjects, data were anonymized, protecting identities and opinions utilized in the study.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study was to help provide the DoD with a better understanding of potential impacts to defense contractors caused by periodic contract re-competes, why those impacts might occur, and suggest guidelines that might help to alleviate those concerns. By examining the various contract vehicles and models utilized by government contracting, and highlighting the impacts on contractor morale, productivity, job satisfaction, and retention, this study provided recommendations on ways to better manage the contract bid and award processes, which in turn could deliver increased job stability and a more consistent contractor workforce.

Reduction of Gaps in the Literature

With a contractor workforce of over 650,000 employees, spread over some 50,000 contracting companies, the DoD is one of the world's largest employers, with an extremely diverse workforce in terms of education, experience, and specialized skillsets. Most government contractors are highly experienced and bring a vast array of skills to the workplace; many are former or retired military members with years or decades of practical knowledge. Government contractors are compensated at rates commensurate with white collar professions, however, job security may sometimes be lacking. As the result of company negotiations regarding employee compensation ultimately determines profitability margins, government contracting officials are prohibited from dictating performance bonuses or salary requirements (Post, 2012). Some contractors are hired into billets created for specific contingencies or projects that guarantee employment only for the duration of the current activity. For others, their positions may be tied to longer running programs. However, even these more permanent types of employment are still subject to periodic re-competes, where a contract is awarded for a specified period of time, usually no more than 5 years. While it is not a given, often the incumbent contract holder is at a

disadvantage during the re-compete, due to government contracting and bid requirements, and is frequently underbid or disqualified, resulting in the loss of the contract. This leads to a period of uncertainty and stress for defense contractors in the periods immediately preceding and after a contract re-compete.

Implications for Biblical Integration

God has a plan for all of us as evidenced by the career paths and choices which lead to employment in the defense contractor industry. While God was the original Creator, his work continues through the actions of his creations, the humans that inhabit this fallen world (Hardy, 1990). He has given talents to all, believer and non-believer alike, to execute his vision and in service to our fellow man (Keller & Alsdorf, 2012). As talents are not limited to Christians alone, so are they also not limited by choice of profession. 1 Peter, 4:10 tells us “As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God” (KJV). As we move forward in our quest to fulfill God’s vision while at the same time serving our fellow man, we are meant to share our talents with all, regardless of our position in society (Hardy, 1990). God’s plan is revealed differently to each of us, but for many, especially those that eventually entered the defense contractor field, that plan led to an initial choice of a life of service with a chosen vocation in the military.

A commonly cited phrase remarks that “there are no atheists in fox holes.” While many seek comfort from God in times of stress and danger, most military members enter service with a strong Christian ethos and worldview and follow the wisdom from Isaiah 1:17 “Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow” (KJV). These are many of the tasks encountered in a military career as members serve in assignments around the globe; many joined simply to serve God, country, and mankind as a whole. After a successful

and fulfilling military career, many military retirees, as well as those that separate prior to retirement, desire to continue their service, and find the means to do so through a position in the defense contracting community. These types of positions allow them to continue down the same path of servitude, freely sharing the talents bestowed upon them by God for the benefit of all. Their belief is mirrored in Hebrews 6:10, which tells us “For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister” (KJV).

The choices made in determining contract bid and award procedures can assist in allowing such individuals to continue serving with minimal upheaval by creating processes which smoothly transition between contract vehicles, increasing the likelihood of defense contractors choosing to remain in service, while reducing losses of these irreplaceable employees to the civilian sector. Far too frequently, the stresses created by the contract re-compete processes drive our best and brightest from their vocational careers.

Benefit to Business Practice and Relationship to Cognate

This study focused on the causal relationship of contract re-competes and the impact on defense contractor morale, productivity, job satisfaction, and retention. Secondly, it described the pitfalls within the contract bid and award processes that drive defense contractors from their chosen profession and away from the vocational aspects of their post-military careers. While it is an inescapable aspect of the defense contracting field that occasionally contracts must be modified, cancelled, or re-competed, the impacts on defense contractors can be mitigated by modifying some of the more detrimental contracting vehicles, such as low-bid selections. Contractors are driven by many of the same aspects others face in their professional lives; the security and safety needs expressed by Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs clearly indicate some of

the basic requirements to keep contractors engaged and employed. The motivations required to keep employees focused on their primary job priorities fall higher up the Maslow pyramid, including the ability to continue to advance and meet self-actualization goals (Jyothi, 2016). Additionally, Herzberg's Motivation Hygiene (Two-Factor) Theory suggests other considerations such as job security and satisfaction fall into the hygiene factors which provide some of the rationale for continuing in a sometimes difficult and demanding profession (Herzberg et al., 1959). Finally, Lee and Mitchell's Unfolding Model of Turnover suggests that the stresses associated with a contract re-compete can be the impetus to consider additional paths to fulfillment; when the current environment no longer supports a chosen career path, a defense contractor may well depart for greener pastures (Holtom et al., 2017).

Summary of the Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in a clearer understanding of how and why periodic contract re-competes may negatively impact defense contractor morale, job satisfaction, productivity, and retention. By examining the different contract vehicles, and how each can affect contractor perceptions into job security, compensation, and benefit concerns, as well as seniority and its accompanying perquisites, this study laid the groundwork vital to revamping contracting practices to be more equitable and less disruptive. Exposing the true cost of the systems currently being used in terms of negative contractor performance and undesirable retention trends allowed this study to deliver the impetus to strive for a fairer and more equitable contracting method, providing the government customer with the talent, dedication, and desired longevity from a contractor force that is better motivated to perform during the tumultuous times of a contract re-compete.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The purpose of this literature review was to provide a basic understanding of the issues potentially affecting defense contractors due to recurring contract re-competes and establish a foundation to examine how these issues may impact morale, productivity, job satisfaction, and retention. The material reviewed here consists of scholarly, peer-reviewed journal articles which helped provide an understanding of the theories and factors which influence employee performance in the defense contractor industry.

Business Practices

To understand how and why contractors are impacted by recurring contract re-competes, one must first understand the underlying issues created by the current government contracting process. The practice of establishing contracts for the purchase and delivery of goods and services stretches back through antiquity. Current observances and intricacies in today's civil law can be traced back to Roman times, but the original concept goes back much further. For example, the Bible contains many contractual agreements, as necessary to fulfill both spiritual and material needs. Those types of arrangements, dating from Biblical times, still show up in the contractual agreements of today's commercialized world (Magiru & Magiru, 2016). One good illustration from the Bible is found in Leviticus 25:14 "And if thou sell ought unto thy neighbour, or buyest ought of thy neighbour's hand, ye shall not oppress one another" (KJV). This mostly spiritual guidance enforces the idea that once a contract has come into effect, both parties must operate to faithfully discharge their duties as specified within. A key concept of contracting is that the involved parties must have entered into the agreement of their own free will, as coercion and duplicity will void the contract.

As to be expected, the field of government contracting is highly complex and extremely competitive. While many goods and services are generally available through normal commerce channels, the government often requires specialty services such as defense requirements that are not readily available in the open market. Contracts must clearly state what services or goods are expected, the desired time frame, and what compensation will be provided; what is known as an offer, acceptance, and a meeting of the minds (Horan, 2019). A fourth requirement for an enforceable contract is that the government official must have the legal authority to enter into a binding contractual agreement (Horan, 2019). Having established that requirement, it should also be noted that it is incumbent for all parties to such an agreement to ensure they are acting within the bounds of their designated authorities (Horan, 2019).

The road to obtaining a government contract begins with the issuance of a request for proposal (RFP) or request for quotes (RFQ) from the government stating what goods or services are requested, in what quantity, and bounded by a specific timeframe (Common Federal Contracting Terms, n.d.). RFPs provide a framework or guideline for the contract acquisition, including the type of contract, a statement of work, factors to be evaluated, and instructions for preparing the proposal or bid (Rumbaugh, 2015). The RFP or RFQ may be preceded by a Pre-solicitation Notice, which will provide information about an upcoming contract opportunity in the future and may ask interested parties to provide information to be used in determining if the contract would qualify as a set-aside for a disadvantaged business (Common Federal Contracting Terms, n.d.). The solicitation may also include a Sources Sought in the form of a request for information (RFI) to understand the capabilities and interests of the types of businesses that might submit proposals for the advertised opportunity (Common Federal Contracting Terms, n.d.). Interested companies respond by submitting a proposal which meets the evaluation criteria

as substantiated in the RFP, as well as the bidder's rationale for why their company is best equipped to execute the contract (Rumbaugh, 2015). While a proposal need not exhibit perfection to win, it does need to meet the government's expectations in line with RFP evaluation criteria and come in at a price point the customer considers to be fair and reasonable (Rumbaugh, 2015).

A variety of different contract vehicles are utilized by the government to purchase goods and services. Among some of the more common types are firm-fixed price contracts and cost-plus contracts. Although these terms apply more to the execution side of the contracting process, they must also be accounted for in the bidding process. RFPs specify the type of competition in the bidding process, usually using either a best value proposition or lowest bid criteria. Often contract bids are subject to set asides for small, disadvantaged businesses, or those owned by minorities, women, or military veterans.

A firm-fixed price contract is one in which the government and contracting company agree to a total price for the goods or services provided, not subject to any type of adjustment in the possibility of the contractor's costs rising during execution (Services Administration Acquisition Manual 48 C.F.R. § 16.202-1, 2020). This type of arrangement protects the government from cost overruns and places the risk of profit or loss squarely on the performance of the contractor, with effectiveness and efficiency being rewarded by the accrual of greater profit margins. In rare instances, companies who effectively contend the scope of performance has greatly exceeded that which was envisioned and negotiated during the contract bid, can apply for and receive an equitable adjustment to the contract terms to provide relief and a recovery of increased costs due to government misrepresentations proven to be unreasonable (Horan & Bell, 2015). This is commonly due to unrealistic estimates of production or service requirements either

in scope or quantity due to inadequate or negligent forecasting, or an unforeseen change in timing or scheduling due to alterations in the government's requirements, which could not have been reasonably anticipated by the contractor (Horan & Bell, 2015). Whether or not this type of post-performance equitable adjustment is allowed is frequently based on how much risk is inherently apparent during the contract bidding process; if apparent, contractors must price this into their firm-fixed contract bid, or alternatively request the contract type be altered to one that allows for risk mitigation and shifts some of that burden onto the customer (Horan & Bell, 2015). If this is not possible or acceptable, contractors may wish to drop from the bidding process before becoming a party to a contract that will prove ultimately to be unprofitable.

A cost-plus-fixed-fee contract is one in which the government agrees to reimburse the contracting company for allowable cost incurred in executing the contract up to a pre-negotiated ceiling (Federal Acquisition Regulation, 48 C.F.R. § 16.306, 2020). The fixed fee can be adjusted as necessary as performance requirements vary during contract execution and allows contract vehicles to be utilized where the risk to the contracting company may be too high for other types of contracts. The downside to this type of contract is it fails to incentivize contractors to minimize costs, putting the onus of risk acceptance on the government as they pay the going rate for goods and services plus the contract bid agreed upon margins for profit and overhead expenses. A successful bid from the government's perspective is one in which the desired goods or services meet the customer's requirements, while the cost remains competitive within the constraints of a given market (Vollmers et al., 2016). To accomplish this goal, customers often introduce cost controls, which require standardization in formats and definitions, allowing government analysts to fairly compare and contrast bids before recommending a contract winner (Vollmers et al., 2016). These types of requirements, while sometimes seen as costly and

burdensome, are necessary to reduce conflicts of interpretation between the parties, as the products or services to be purchased are often complex and unique to the defense industry (Vollmers et al., 2016). Cost-plus-fixed-fee term contracts generally require the contractor to provide a level of effort at a specified threshold within a stated time period; when the time period has expired, and if the contracting company has provided the agreed upon performance, the fixed fee is paid as stated in the contract (Federal Acquisition Regulation, 48 C.F.R. § 16.306, 2020). If additional periods of performance are desired, or the scope and nature of the contract have changed, the contract is re-competed with a revised fee and cost basis (Federal Acquisition Regulation, 48 C.F.R. § 16.306, 2020).

Often contract bidding requirements incorporate the Small Business Administration's (SBA) set-asides for minority, women, or veteran owned disadvantaged business entities which require the Office of Federal Procurement Policy, in conjunction with the SBA, to set aside parts of multiple-award contracts or task orders of openly competed contracts solely for award to small businesses (Masielo, 2020). These set-asides provide a mechanism to provide a competitive advantage to small businesses characterized by size limitations, numbers of employees, or overall contract monetary value, whose majority ownership is held by a socially disadvantaged individual (Federal Acquisition Regulation, 48 C.F.R. § 52.219, 2020). Recent rule changes by the SBA allow small businesses different options in calculating business receipts and how mergers or acquisitions might affect their eligibility (Crcsius et al., 2020). Companies can now choose to use either a three-year or five-year receipt average, and may reorganize a segregable division as a wholly owned subsidiary in order to exempt the subsidiary's employees and receipts when calculating its size for SBA purposes after the closing is complete (Crcsius et al., 2020). Additionally, the government may provide benefits such as sole-source (non-competitive)

contracts as well as technical assistance, management assistance, and government sponsored mentor relationships (Lewis, 2017). Contract awards based on socioeconomic characteristics of the majority business stakeholders are provided under Section 8(a) of the Small Business act, and while largely successful, occasionally underperform and can be influenced by political and other considerations; this is notable when considering that annual contract awards to small businesses by the government can exceed \$90 billion (Lewis, 2017). Unfortunately, the award of an 8(a) set-aside provides a limited benefit to the small business awardee, as most find themselves priced out of subsequent bidding opportunities because of their success and subsequent growth, and often exit the market completely upon completion of the contract, automatically creating prime contractor turnover through the re-compete process (Lewis, 2017). While the former 8(a) may join a consortium of businesses with a new 8(a) as the lead, if the group is successful, the incumbent still loses, as the 8(a) winner will usually claim 50% or more of the available personnel billets under the new contract. Another issue arises in the event an 8(a) decides to allow itself to become the object of an acquisition or merger. Government agencies must set aside a certain percentage of contracts for small, disadvantaged, or minority, veteran, or women owned businesses; if the 8(a) is subsequently acquired by a business that does not qualify under the SBA rules, the procuring agency can no longer accrue credit towards its small business set-aside goals (Biggs, 2019). One cure for this now defective contract is for the government to exercise its ability to terminate the contract for convenience, or to shift new task orders or additional work orders to remaining 8(a) companies still on the contract, if any exist (Biggs, 2019). In the event these remaining 8(a) companies are serving as subcontractors to a larger prime contractor, the prime may also fail to meet its required percentage of small business

contracting goals, and may become less inclined to steer business to the newly acquired contract entity (Biggs, 2019).

Contracts are often awarded under the criteria of lowest bid, technically acceptable. This system, also referred to as tendering, was designed to persuade companies to offer their lowest price through a process in which bidders are restricted from any knowledge of the other entities bidding, including bid amounts, allowing the procurer to obtain goods and services for the lowest possible amount (Yu et al., 2013). Although this process allows the customer to acquire goods and services at the lowest price, it is often seen as a “race to the bottom” and is viewed as prioritizing cost over technical value; recent FAR rule changes have restricted its use to very limited circumstances and fields where specific criteria have been met, including procuring information technology services, personal protective equipment, or training or logistics services in contingency operations outside of the United States (Crcsius et al., 2020). Unfortunately, these restrictions are not permanent, and are often driven by budgeting considerations. Competitive bidding requires companies to proceed through two stages; the first stage is qualification, in which companies are evaluated against contract bid prerequisites, followed by the second stage, the scoring stage, in which contracting officials seek to determine which is the best qualified bid, and thence the contract awardee (Dekel & Dotan, 2018). Qualification scoring is generally seen to be unbiased, with each bid being examined discretely, while grading during the scoring stage is often unduly influenced by what is known as lower bid bias, comparing company submissions against each other and frequently disregarding deviations from contract specifications in favor of granting the lower bidder an unjust advantage (Dekel & Dotan, 2018). The scoring process requires evaluators to take into account many factors while utilizing scoring principals that are often vague and ill-defined, resulting in complex decision making where price becomes a

prominent factor in a multidimensional comparison (Dekel & Dotan, 2018). During the qualification stage, companies are often called upon to demonstrate the availability of qualified personnel to execute the contract, what is known as the proposal being “technically acceptable.” For an incumbent contracting company, it may submit proof of past performance; companies new to the bidding process must provide a proposal which meets or exceeds the acceptability standards of bid specified non-cost factors (Federal Acquisition Regulation, 48 C.F.R. § 15.101-2, 2020). Proof of employee expertise is regularly provided through resume submission, showing that the bidding company has access to the types of personnel possessing the requisite expertise and security clearances. Companies tend to restrict access to current employees, often by requiring workers to sign noncompeting agreements or covenants not to compete as a condition of employment and to diminish the negotiating strategy of a competitor (Anand et al., 2018). Additionally, companies must be able to abide by the bid requirements for the production of specific quantities of services or goods or be able to provide the contract’s desired end-product. Much of this detail can be pre-empted by proper bid design, risk can be mitigated with accurate contract specifications, and requirements for appropriate contract administration can ensure defects are identified and cured within a suitable timeframe (Manea, 2018). Failing to take all of this into consideration can cause delays in contract delivery and force the contracting parties into arbitration or litigation to resolve disputed issues.

Recent developments in contracting procedures have seen the introduction of best value propositions in the contract bidding process, described as a system that costs less and works better. A contract awarded under a best value construct should be one where it is in the best interest of the customer, in this case the government, to consider awarding the contract to a company that is not necessarily the lowest bidder or that offers the highest probability of

technically acceptable performance (Federal Acquisition Regulation, 48 C.F.R. § 15.101-2, 2020). This allows the government to make tradeoffs between non-cost factors and price, although the perceived benefits of selecting a higher cost proposal must be supportable, and the solicitation must clearly outline how the combination of all evaluation factors will be weighed in making the selection (Federal Acquisition Regulation, 48 C.F.R. § 15.101-2, 2020). Pricing contracts by value rather than simply by cost focuses on the needs of the customer and which benefits the customer desires to receive, providing a sound purchasing rationale for purchasing goods and services at a higher price (Garrett, 2008). Customers are able to consider an array of other contract quality characteristics regardless of price, including time, image, maintenance, operations, management, and environmental aspects (Yu et al., 2013). As opposed to the lowest-bid-technically-acceptable process, best value emphasizes the customers' desires comprising effectiveness, efficiency, quality, value, and performance, and has been found to result in greater customer satisfaction even if the cost is somewhat higher (Yu et al., 2013).

Once a contract has been awarded, it is common for one or more of the rejected bidders to file a protest, alleging a discrepancy in the bidding process that should have resulted in a different result. In the defense contracting world, protests are almost automatic, and while frequently settled by arbitration, some make their way into the federal court system, requiring an automatic stay, and often requiring an extension of the incumbent company's performance while awaiting a verdict (Szeliga, 2008). Although the government is required to establish the criteria under which the winning company triumphed, it will not provide a point-by-point comparison, and will only disclose competitive ranking positions under evaluation factors, the winner's bid amount, and the determining criteria for the successful bid (Szeliga, 2008). Protests are only upheld about a quarter of the time, and those which challenge best-value and technically based

judgements are rarely fruitful; this must be contrasted with expenses of litigation as well as the very real likelihood of damaging a relationship with the customer and the possibilities of losing future contract opportunities (Szeliga, 2008).

The Problem

The motivation theories previously discussed provided significant insights into conditions affecting job satisfaction in the workplace. Studies have shown acceptable compensation and good working conditions are correlated to the lower two levels of Maslow's pyramid and are required conditions to empower employees to reach higher social needs within the hierarchy (Ristovska & Eftimov, 2019). Other factors, such as praise, rewards, benefits and recognition as well as promotions and professional development lead to increased happiness in the workplace and provide the requisite conditions for achieving self-actualization, the highest level in Maslow's pyramid (Ristovska & Eftimov, 2019). Interestingly, several of the factors influencing job satisfaction are tied to education levels, with those at lower levels valuing wages and benefits more, while those with higher education levels viewing the social and self-actualization tiers as having more worth (Ristovska & Eftimov, 2019).

Some studies have identified the quality of work life, defined as the degree to which employees view the work environment as favorable or unfavorable, as a key component of intrinsic motivation, productivity, and job satisfaction (Patel, 2019). For those employees who experience dissatisfaction, it is often expressed through boredom, anger, or frustration, regardless of status or position, and can negatively impact both the individual and organization through increased turnover, decreased productivity and profitability, and may limit the company's ability to entice or retain qualified employees (Patel, 2019). Some of the aspects employees found impactful on overall job satisfaction included appropriate compensation levels, open

communication with management, the potential for promotions based on performance, recognition for exemplary execution of assigned duties, and availability of an acceptable package of benefits (Patel, 2019). Putting any of these aspects into jeopardy, no matter what the cause, increased the possibility of worker dissatisfaction.

A separate study examined the effect of work life balance, defined as the ability to balance work and non-work responsibilities with family commitments, as it pertains to job satisfaction and work-related productivity. One of the more negative aspects, which is unfortunately common in various contractor industries, is the issue of unpaid overtime work, which employees perceive as having a negative effect on their ability to balance their personal and business responsibilities, and creating a work environment seen as not being conducive to a satisfactory work life balance (Talukder, 2019). This results in what is referred to as work-family conflict, and indicates the lack of a formal, employer sponsored, family-supportive environment which decreases employee job satisfaction and motivation, and reduces competitive advantage for the organization (Talukder, 2019). Supervisor support, where management makes an effort to support employees balancing responsibilities between work and home, can provide resources to help employees better balance and integrate competing demands, alleviate stress, and increase employees' organizational commitment, resulting in better involvement and identification with the organization's goals and objectives (Talukder, 2019).

In addition to work life balance, organizations can also influence worker productivity and job satisfaction by instituting work flexibility, which has been shown to increase a company's ability to attract, obtain, and retain high quality employees (Capnary et al., 2018). The introduction of flexible working hours is also seen by employees as vesting additional responsibility, is credited with reducing stress, and has a positive impact on job satisfaction,

providing a better work life balance with minimized conflict and an enhanced ability to meet family and work commitments (Capnary et al., 2018). After implementation of work hour flexibility, companies find increased job satisfaction, enhanced loyalty to the corporation, and a sense of employee responsibility to increase contributions which assist in developing and building the organization (Capnary et al., 2018).

Concepts

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. One of the more well-known theories of motivation is Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Maslow proposed a pyramid of needs that helps to understand how individuals rank and diversify the motivational factors by categories (Abrudan, 2016). The lower two tiers address individual needs required for simple existence, including shelter, food, and clothing, as well as the security needs desired to protect the individual and family (Abrudan, 2016). The next two levels refer to group social needs, requiring both cooperation and competition and are primarily psychologically based, while the final level, that of self-actualization once again focuses on the individual (Abrudan, 2016). In the business world, the ability to ensure employees progress through the tiers of Maslow's hierarchy to become productive professionals is very much dependent on the skills of management, and can be affected by outside distractions, such as those raised by a contract re-compete.

What then, are the things that motivate employees to perform to their highest ability, moving towards self-actualization, and maximizing production for the benefit of the organization? Employees require several attributes to be successful, including opportunity, ability, and motivation (Jyothi, 2016). Motivation can come from a variety of factors, including monetary and non-monetary incentives, but both are normally required to induce the desired level of employee performance (Jyothi, 2016). Monetary inducements are generally seen to

provide for the physiological and safety needs at the bottom of Maslow's hierarchy, while the psychological needs of love, esteem, and self-actualization are normally only satisfied through non-monetary type benefits (Jyothi, 2016). As the lower level needs are satisfied, they cease to become motivators; by the same token, if the needs at the bottom of the pyramid are threatened, the focus shifts downward until they are no longer in jeopardy (Guillén et al., 2015). The fear of loss of employment or diminished wages and benefits occasioned by a contract re-compete tends to drive workers to the lower tiers of the hierarchy and away from the upper tiers desired for optimum employee performance.

Historically, Maslow's theory has been the foundation for much research and has frequently served as the baseline for additional motivational theories. Several theories have explored the application of Maslow's theory to describe employee motivation in terms of satisfaction, commitment, and engagement, moving from employees at the lower levels of the pyramid as being satisfied, those in the middle as committed, and those at the highest level as being engaged and thoroughly involved in the mission and work of the organization (Madan, 2017). Engaged employees are seen as having a stronger belief in the organization's vision and mission, desire to improve its processes, and have a wish to innovate on behalf of the organization's success (Madan, 2017). A welcome side effect of employee engagement is the trend to remain with the organization for an extended period of time, lowering employee turnover, which in turn reduces costs while maintaining performance, benefitting the organization in terms of success and profitability (Madan, 2017).

Maslow's hierarchy has also been used to determine the constraints and restraints of employment agreements, which specify the tasks and work environment on the part of the employer, and the skill, experience, and competencies to be provided by the employee. These

types of agreements are normally acknowledged to consist of two separate codicils; the formal agreement specifying terms of employment and signed by the two parties, and a non-verbal psychological agreement which controls the informal and formal relationships between employer and worker (Gaile & Šumilo, 2015). The formal agreement indicates the exchange of labor for compensation and provision of a good working environment, meeting Maslow's bottom tiers of safety and security (Gaile & Šumilo, 2015). The psychological contract, along with organizational support, provides a social environment which promotes meeting the next two tiers of the hierarchy, while fulfillment of the lower tiers allows employees to seek self-actualization by providing a venue for growth, creativity, and understanding (Gaile & Šumilo, 2015).

Research has demonstrated that when employers meet the requirements of Maslow's hierarchy by providing adequate compensation, empowerment, fulfillment, and managerial support, employees reward them with increased productivity, loyalty, efficiency, and higher retention levels (Stewart et al., 2018). By utilizing Maslow's hierarchy in providing for employee needs, management has the ability to combine organizational culture, wage structures, perquisites, and supervisory performance into a unified whole, satisfying both physiological and psychological needs (Stewart et al., 2018). On the other hand, if management fails to provide the economic and material rewards sought by employees, or fails to meet psychological or emotional needs, workers may perceive that while survival needs are being met, management has created an environment in which they feel threatened, and retaliate by work slowdowns, acts of sabotage, or by ultimately seeking employment elsewhere, taking their talents and experience to a competitor (Stewart et al., 2018). This is potentially the situation as perceived by defense contractors during contract re-compete.

Herzberg's Motivation Hygiene (Two-Factor) Theory. Another leading theory of motivation is Herzberg's Motivation Hygiene (Two-Factor) Theory. Herzberg's described two factors which classify human motivation as either extrinsic or intrinsic factors (Guillén et al., 2015). An extrinsic factor is one that is specifically perceived as leading to a certain outcome resulting in receiving something externally, while an intrinsic factor motivates by promoting behavior which is inherently enjoyable or interesting, resulting in an internal reward (Guillén et al., 2015).

Of the two categories of factors, one is seen as resulting in job satisfaction in the workplace, including characteristics such as recognition, achievement, advancement, and responsibility, while the second is viewed as possibly resulting in dissatisfaction and demotivation, identifying negative attributes including company administration and policies, management, working conditions, interpersonal relations, and compensation (Issa Eid, 2016). Motivation tends to be a decisive factor in promoting a positive attitude in the workplace, with several motivators resulting in a significant proportion of the incentives which drive employee behavior; these include the overall level of compensation and benefits, a perception of fairness within the company's promotion system, positive relationships between employees and management, safe working conditions, prospects for recognition, career development opportunities, and job security (Issa Eid, 2016). How an organization's management administers these elements, and the resultant satisfaction of group and individual needs, determines the employees' efforts, attitudes, actions, decisions, and behaviors in executing those activities that contribute to the overall fulfillment of company objectives (Issa Eid, 2016).

Among employees similar in nature to defense contractors are government civilians, employed in a host of occupations across a vast array of bureaucracies. For most civilian

employees, motivational bases rest on extrinsic rewards and associated working conditions which include compensation, benefits, and job related security, and are often seen as focus areas which can increase motivation and output among workers (Hur, 2018). These levers are often unavailable in the government workforce, with those employees often characterized as members of negatively regarded institutions, evincing low responsiveness and insensitivity when dealing with their citizen clients (Hur, 2018). For those employees, Herzberg's theory suggests hygiene factors such as recognition, achievement, and increased responsibility may hold the key to improving morale and motivation, as other enticements are often limited by regulation and tied more to tenure than performance (Hur, 2018).

Organizations rely on many varied resources to meet business objectives and company-oriented goals. Customer satisfaction is a key enabler of success, reliant on the right mix of products and service; the key factor for businesses to achieve corporate success is directly tied to their most important resource, competent and motivated employees (Fareed & Jan, 2016). Recent studies have identified a shift away from the previous emphasis on external sources to generate corporate success and profit margins to focus on internal sources, including most importantly motivated and satisfied employees (Fareed & Jan, 2016). Identification of those factors suggested by Herzberg to increase job satisfaction and motivation can support efforts by management to promote issues which positively influence the workforce, while eliminating those contributing to job dissatisfaction, low morale, and decreased productivity (Fareed & Jan, 2016).

Job satisfaction is highly correlated with employee performance and motivation, which, when viewed through a positive lens, illustrates organizational commitment and citizenship combined with reduced absenteeism and turnover (Ward, 2019). One of the key motivators described by Herzberg is simply satisfaction with work; combined with other facets of

employments such as ample pay and recognition, job satisfaction tends to lead to persistence in a chosen career, reducing recruiting and training costs while increasing performance and productivity (Ward, 2019). While motivators (intrinsic) are necessary for job satisfaction, lack of them may not be sufficient to induce turnover as is more likely the case when hygiene (extrinsic) factors are insufficient (Ward, 2019).

Frequently addressed in terms of employee motivation, Herzberg's theory is also applicable from the management perspective. In order to convince employees to dedicate themselves to the organizational goals, managers increasingly seek to improve their motivational skills and techniques (Rahimic & Beslaga, 2016). This translates to encompass virtually all industries, and across both developed and developing economies, although studies have shown discrepancies in the successful use of immaterial and material motivators based on the level of local development (Rahimic & Beslaga, 2016). Countries with more developed economies tend to have better developed and more intensive approaches to employee motivation, placing more emphasis on employee needs and quality of work-life, which generates higher worker satisfaction and more productive employees (Rahimic & Beslaga, 2016).

Many industries are dependent on the quality of employees, and gains in productivity are tied directly to improvement in employee skill levels combined with increases in employee motivation (Dobre et al., 2017). Motivation can be increased by a number of differing interventions; the most common are financial incentives, but non-financial instruments have been shown to be viable candidates as well, and have shown promise in not only increasing motivation, but also decreasing turnover (Dobre et al., 2017). By the same token, while increasing knowledge and training coupled with additional responsibility can increase job satisfaction, when wages and benefits are not commensurate as well, employees may become

demotivated and accordingly decrease their inputs or seek alternative employment opportunities (Dobre et al., 2017).

Lee and Mitchell's Unfolding Model of Turnover. A third theory useful for analyzing motivation focused on why employees seek alternative employment as a result of job dissatisfaction is Lee and Mitchell's Unfolding Model of Turnover. In today's interconnected and often highly technological economy, human capabilities and intellectual capital have become one of the key sources of organizational competitive advantage, where voluntary turnover results in disruptive and expensive trends in employment and can cause exceedingly great damage to a company's performance and ultimately its bottom line (Niederman et al., 2007). Lee and Mitchell's theory posited employees follow one of four decision pathways which are delineated by certain characteristics such as negative feelings toward their current employment status or the introduction of previously unavailable alternative employment opportunities (Niederman et al., 2007). Once employees encounter a "shock" or an unanticipated change in their employment prospects, they then execute a pre-planned sequence of behaviors based on pre-determined thresholds which eventually result in voluntary employee turnover (Niederman et al., 2007). This pre-planned exit scheme is commonly referred to as a script, based on previous experiences, research and investigation, or observations of others contemplating similar action (Holtom et al., 2017). Employees then enter into a search for viable substitutes for employment, and having found alternatives, actively evaluate and compare them with their current circumstances (Holtom et al., 2017). These actions may be triggered by an image violation, when the vision of the employer becomes incompatible with the employee's goals and strategies, or when the employee encounters decreasing job satisfaction over a prolonged period of time, and determines the

emotional, intellectual and financial reimbursements as provided are no longer sufficient (Holtom et al., 2017).

These types of termination decisions are often seen as intuitive, where employees, faced with an uncertain situation, look to the past for similar circumstances and the accompanying decision making, with intimations of success or failure coloring their choices in the present (McWilliams, 2011). The “shock” as described by Lee and Mitchell disturbs an employee’s current employment perception, leading to attempts to assimilate novel information into the current scheme, often by distortion, or by changing current goals and values to accommodate the new data points (McWilliams, 2011). Studies into voluntary turnover have revealed of the high proportions of employees choosing to leave employment, some 60% had experienced a shock rather than solely an accumulation of job dissatisfaction, while up to 90% of employees that quit their jobs had utilized one of the paths described in Lee and Mitchell’s theory (McWilliams, 2011).

The unfolding model relies on rational decision making, but also includes elements of intuition and non-rational thought processes related to the employees values, employment goals, and the strategies employed to reach desired goals (Morrell et al., 2008). Lee and Mitchell incorporated four alternative paths to turnover, predicated on an employee receiving a shock, and having developed predetermined plans of action should such a shock occur (Morrell et al., 2008). These four exclusive paths entertain a variety of circumstances and outcomes. Dependent on the shock itself, employees may execute a pre-determined plan with a path to re-employment, may determine the shock to be so dissonant as to trigger turnover without a job offer in hand, or may allow dissatisfaction to build over the long term, culminating in a decision to terminate employment with or without a job offer in hand (Morrell et al., 2008).

A number of factors impact the decision to voluntarily terminate employment; among those are the attitudes of the employees, primarily influenced by management and company policies, and the perception of the desirability and ease of finding a new job (Donnelly & Quirin, 2006). Ease of movement is perceived by how readily a new job might be available, while desirability is linked to how much an employee appreciates his or her current situation, or how much job dissatisfaction currently exists (Donnelly & Quirin, 2006). Lee and Mitchell's theory is helpful in assisting employers in identifying those employee perceptions; by illuminating the types of employment events that lead employees to consider leaving, managers can anticipate the decision process and attempt to influence employee choices, allowing for better management of the turnover cycle (Donnelly & Quirin, 2006).

Theories

There are numerous theories expounding on the initiatives that result in employee motivation. Motivation itself is an intrinsic factor that provides a rationale for people to behave in a particular way and has both positive and negative aspects. For managers and business executives, well-designed systems energize employees to act in a manner that is consistent with, and supporting to, company policies and desired outcomes (Le Grand & Roberts, 2018). When these same systems are poorly designed or executed, employees tend to prioritize their own needs over those of the organization, often leading to demotivated workers, the pursuit of activities which are not linked to organizational goals, and frequently negative outcomes inconsistent with management's policies and philosophies (Le Grand & Roberts, 2018). Numerous initiatives have been devised to direct and modify motivations, often aimed at organizational structures, but sometimes focused on individual employees, providing guidance and incentives to conform to company objectives (Le Grand & Roberts, 2018).

One proven method of motivating employees is setting goals which help to focus attention and assist employees in sustaining efforts to achieve their ambitions (Downes et al., 2017). In addition to goal-setting management can increase motivation by providing feedback and by designing objectives which employees perceive to be important to accomplish, for both personal and organizational achievement (Downes et al., 2017). As employees come to realize their individual goals are aligned with the corporation's overall policies and objectives, they develop motives supporting goal achievement and job satisfaction directly tied to organizational success (Downes et al., 2017). Failure to gain this visualization can lead to employees and organizations that are working at perceived cross purposes and result in negative outcomes.

Often motivational theories are divided into two conflicting classes; the “needs” category as espoused by Maslow in which employees respond to needs rank ordered by importance, and the class of expectancy theories, where employees are motivated by self-determination of where their desired needs levels exist and how much value they ascribe to a desired outcome (Ehiobuce & Luing, 2013). Additional theories have been proposed building on Maslow’s work, and continuing to express needs in a hierarchical construct, while expectancy theorists hold that motivation is achieved by setting goals that are realistic, even if difficult to attain, and within the capabilities of the employee (Ehiobuce & Luing, 2013). In all theories, however, no matter how inspirationally an objective is presented, if it is not perceived as realistic and obtainable, it will fail to motivate due to the apparent unlikelihood of achieving it (Ehiobuce & Luing, 2013).

One of the key determinants of employee success is job satisfaction, the lack of which has been shown to negatively impact productivity and retention. Low job satisfaction has been found to be largely responsible for several negative employee outcomes, including counterproductive conduct, absenteeism, turnover, and early retirement (Sell & Cleal, 2011).

Factors which contribute to these issues include work locations, duty hours, difficulty in meeting performance goals, and on-the-job hazards, which must be equalized by commensurate increases in compensating wages (Sell & Cleal, 2011). This theory, however, is bounded by assumptions of perfect information being available to employers and employees alike, and availability of mobility for affected workers, neither of which may be fully realized or utilized in determining job satisfaction based solely on compensation (Sell & Cleal, 2011).

Motivational theory becomes more complex when it must account for the multi-generational constitution of the workforce. The various generations which currently comprise the workforce today have differing characteristics, work ethics, and motivational factors impacting both individual and organizational performance, and which must be taken into account by management tasked with leading across the employment spectrum (Heyns & Kerr, 2018). Previous generational workforces were more homogenous, while today's generations tend to be more unique and are driven to perform by different motivational factors, requiring acute insight into the needs of the generational groups (Heyns & Kerr, 2018). Older workers prefer job security and stability, believing in traditional attributes of sacrifice and hard work as the means to success, while younger employees place more emphasis on work-life balance and independence, all of which must be accounted for and balanced out by managerial approaches (Heyns & Kerr, 2018).

Defense contractors, while a specialized breed due to the nature of their work and the prerequisites for entering the field, are still employees, and their performance is subject to the same market forces and work environment issues as found in other industries. Performance is inextricably linked to the degree to which those employees perceive they are being properly utilized and integrated into the value creation of the organization that hired them (Raffiee &

Byun, 2020). Successful organizations are able to leverage their employee's human capital which includes individual characteristics such as abilities, skills, and professional knowledge in creating value and economic advantage (Raffiee & Byun, 2020). Job performance as a whole is an important metric for business success, as positive performance can transform employee behavioral characteristics into direct and indirect contributions towards the organization's goals, and into value based behavior which supports the company's bottom line (Reyhanoglu & Akin, 2020). On the other hand, employees experiencing dysfunction in the workplace can often display counterproductive behavior with an intention to inflict damage on an organization, including work slowdowns, tardiness or absenteeism, abuse and damage to organizational assets, violation of workplace norms, misrepresentations of problems or mistakes to management, or even escalating to workplace sabotage or negligence (Reyhanoglu & Akin, 2020). Organizational climate, which includes the social climate and atmosphere associated with policies instituted within the workplace, is based upon shared perceptions, and impacts how employees view behaviors to be unexpected or anticipated, punished or rewarded, and has a major effect on job satisfaction, performance, and organizational commitment (Reyhanoglu & Akin, 2020). Organizations may experience variations with their organizational climate throughout the business environment based on specific categories such as safety, support, service, and innovation, and individual perceptions are based on how the organization incentivizes or discourages certain activities relating to employee performance (Gabler et al., 2018). By observing what happens around them, and perceiving how an organization measures, rewards, and delineates employee behavior, employees can draw conclusions detailing the organization's priorities, and adjust their performance accordingly (Gabler et al., 2018). This ability is influenced by employee longevity, as experienced employees are better equipped to understand

optimal behavior, while employees which lack this knowledge base are more likely to expend efforts and resources in a less profitable manner, leading to decreased performance and an initial inability to satisfy organizational goals (Gabler et al., 2018). Organizational climate and employee performance are also impacted by inter-employee relationships, with positive outcomes reported where employees are willing to share individual resources such as expertise, knowledge, and access to social networks (Black et al., 2019). When employees are provided feedback on task performance relative to other employees, it tends to increase overall employee performance, although it can negatively impact willingness to share resources with other employees engaged in the same or similar tasks based on a competitive mindset formed as a result of the provided feedback (Black et al., 2019).

Employees can sometimes face conflicting demands for both service and efficiency, creating conflicts in performance actions and confusing employee efforts and attention direction (Audenaert et al., 2019). Much of this conflict can be resolved by appropriate employee performance feedback and management, providing support and clear guidance based on goal-setting and company objectives, and by constantly assessing, monitoring, and rewarding employees that meet organizational expectations (Audenaert et al., 2019). By providing consistency in expectations through employee support and feedback, management provides employees with clarity on company goals, and by developing an unambiguous relationship between perceived behaviors and rewards, employee performance is more likely to be sustained or increased in goal oriented behaviors (Audenaert et al., 2019).

Sources of Employee Morale and Motivation. Whether a business succeeds or not can often be traced to how well management is able to engage employees in terms of morale and motivation. While highly motivated employees create value and assist an organization in

reaching its goals, conversely, demoralized employees may oppose the company's objectives and actively engage in destructive behavior, including work slowdowns. In a logical conclusion to such behavior, a disgruntled employee may seek employment elsewhere, creating downtime, work stoppage, and inefficiencies while the company goes through the requisite processes to recruit, hire, onboard, and train a new employee (Mello, 2015). Employee morale can also be severely impacted by a company's behavior when it comes to ethical considerations regarding contract solicitation, the bidding process, contract acceptance, and performance. Both employees and contract companies may engage in quite circumspect behavior, as ethical margins can be restrictive, and once crossed may erode confidence in a company's ability to successfully prosecute a granted contractual obligation. Demonstrations of ethical behavior are considered normative when falling within prescribed boundaries as are required when dealing with personal decisions and actions as well as interpersonal relationships and corporate behaviors (Feng et al., 2018). Often ethical behavior is tied specifically to principled behavior at the managerial levels, with behavior within ethical norms being promoted, communicated, and reinforced by corporate leadership, which results in employee attitudes and behaviors falling within a desired range containing job satisfaction, morale, and productivity as integral ingredients (Feng et al., 2018). When operating within these prescribed ethical norms, such behavior by management can have a positive impact on employee productivity and creativity.

While ethical conduct by management is essential to maintaining worker confidence and morale, it is not the sole source of employee inspiration. In order to preserve a competitive edge, an organization requires a cohesive, well-functioning and engaged workforce. When management engages in behavior that employees find to be stifling or overly controlling, employee functionality becomes inhibited and morale diminished; alternatively, employees who

are thoroughly engaged in work due to self-motivation, and who find their work to be enjoyable, interesting, or who perceive their contributions to be value-added, generally tend to be more productive, happier, and have higher morale (Jungert et al., 2018). Workers are able to gain additional motivation through interactions with co-workers, and through opening communication channels and sharing information; these types of interactive relationships allow employees to gain additional insight into each other's motivations and perspectives, and to then develop workplace relationships supporting self-motivation and performance autonomy (Jungert et al., 2018).

Management does, however, have a critical role to play in motivating employees, with increased responsibilities and complexities once employees are formed up into teams, requiring managers to assume dual roles to motivate not only individual employees, but also to create an environment where team behavior can flourish as well (Ilies & Metz, 2017). To accomplish these often-conflicting goals, managers have numerous tools from which to choose, seeking not only to reward individualized behavior, but also to recognize the overall efforts and results generated by teamwork. The most effective managers are able to lead by inspiring and motivating employees and teams to perform at their highest levels and sustain maximum productivity while simultaneously meeting the organizations objectives and fulfilling the goals as evinced by the company's mission and business model (Ilies & Metz, 2017).

An organization's human resource department has an outsized role in the success or failure of employee motivation, as they manage what is commonly viewed as the most valuable commodity possessed by the business, the human capital, including everything workers bring to the workplace and employ in the service of the company (Brutu & Mihai, 2018). Human capital, similar to other business expenditures, is expensive, and warrants a return on investment,

assuming the investment into human capital is made in the first place. Within a for-profit business enterprise, human capital is seen to be a key input to not only the success of the organization's current operations portfolio but is also viewed as an essential resource to the viability of the organization moving forward, and as an increasingly important resource determining the company's ability to survive and even thrive in today's competitive market atmosphere (Brutu & Mihai, 2018). Lacking employees both trained and experienced in the business' operational constructs, the company's business model will fail; motivated and trained employees are crucial to business success, as they provide the creativity and necessary ambition to achieve success (Brutu & Mihai, 2018).

Employee productivity, the amount of services or goods produced as a ratio of output to units of capital or labor, is a key metric in assessing a company's profitability and depicts the efficiency with which resources are utilized in achieving corporate objectives. Mergers and acquisitions, a parallel activity to contract re-competes, can have a profound impact, both directly and indirectly, in terms of an entity's business operations, systematic approaches, and employee productivity, with severe implications for the company's value proposition and profitability (Hassan & Lukman, 2020). As previously observed, an organization's human capital determines, to a large extent, the longevity and value of the business, while issues such as decreased productivity and employee turnover can be tied directly to the turmoil caused by these types of activities (Hassan & Lukman, 2020). Activities such as mergers or contract turnovers are generally viewed as opportunities to minimize cost while enhancing profitability and gaining competitive advantage, while on the downside of these events, employee morale and productivity can be diminished due to stress and anxiety caused by fears of job loss and changes in the work environment (Hassan & Lukman, 2020).

An employee's loyalty to an organization is another important consideration in predicting success, as the employee's commitment and participation in the workplace directly impacts motivation and productivity (Khan & Baloch, 2017). Productivity has also been tied to wages, as employees given wages commensurate with their efforts produce both higher quantities and quality of work, while those receiving unsatisfactory wages deliver poor quality and less quantity in return (Khan & Baloch, 2017). When pay is based on performance, employee workplace behavior drives productivity; conversely, when wages are cut, which is common during reorganizations due to a variety of factors, motivation and productivity can suffer, ultimately affecting the organization's bottom line and potential for profitability (Khan & Baloch, 2017).

Employees that feel empowered, supported, and consulted by management perceive being more engaged, and develop a sense of "belonging" to an organization, which increases motivation and productivity, and is more likely to create a positive outcome for both employee and organization (Kumar & Kapoor, 2019). By focusing on longer term planning that includes development activities and systematic learning, employers can increase employee engagement and gradually develop a cultural approach within the organization, while creating the type of intellectual and emotional involvement which drives innovation and productivity, resulting, in turn, to an increase in both profits and corporate growth (Kumar & Kapoor, 2019). These types of investments in training and skill upgradation lead to employee perceptions of worth within the organization, strengthening the bond with the organization, and driving employees to invest personally in the organization's future and to set achievable performance objectives and goals (Kumar & Kapoor, 2019).

Another determinant of employee motivation and the resultant productivity levels is the employee benefit package, an integral part of an employee's total compensation. Employees

expect a variety of benefits in their packages, including the ability to work from home, flexible work hours, team building events, dependent care programs, educational opportunities, monetary performance awards, retirement or pension funds, and vacation and sick leave, just to mention a few (Sreenath et al., 2019). These types of benefits, considered non-wage pay discretionary allotments, are usually provided to all employees, regardless of compensation level, and can be classified into short-term, long-term, and post-employment benefits, often administered in cooperation with, or at the direction of, government entities (Sreenath et al., 2019). Perquisites and benefits can improve motivation and productivity across the board, while eliminating or decreasing benefits, often done as a cost-saving measure or to boost the company's bottom line, can have far reaching, long-term, detrimental effects on employees' motivation and productivity which greatly outweigh the perceived savings (Sreenath et al., 2019).

Constructs

As employees are often a company's most valuable asset, retention should be a key metric in measuring corporate success. Numerous factors, including lowered job satisfaction and a reduction in commitment to organizational goals can lead employees to seek employment elsewhere (Nica, 2018). Individual worker traits, including values and personality, along with a desire to meet employer objectives, can help overcome these factors, helping companies sustain lower employee turnover (Covella et al., 2017). For those businesses that attain higher employee retention levels, the ability to achieve business objectives is much more likely than for companies who create a revolving door of turnover by viewing employees solely as a source of labor and a pathway to profit (Covella et al., 2017). Management and employees both play a key role in retention endeavors, with management making vital personnel decisions, and employees providing the "fit" which greatly impacts longevity; this sense of reciprocity between employees

and managers affects the sense of job satisfaction and ultimately impacts how open an employee becomes to the notion of seeking alternative employment arrangements (Covella et al., 2017).

Among the key aspects impacting retention, compensation, both actual levels and perceived disparities, is among the top determinants of employee satisfaction, morale, productivity, and ultimately, turnover ratios. As the success of organizations can be clearly predicated by how well employees can be recruited and retained, highly qualified and competent employees are greatly impacted by an employer's ability to provide adequate compensation and rewards, ensuring employees' inclination to remain with the company and continue to be productive and responsive to managerial policies (Michael et al., 2016). Compensation and benefits, at a level seen as acceptable to employees, are key to retention of high-performance workers and critical to organizational success, while a lack of these attributes cause employers to lose valued human resources, result in lowered productivity, and create additional and unnecessary expenditures to recruit and train replacements (Michael et al., 2016). Employees are positively motivated by incentives and benefits, job stability and security, bonuses and allowances, adequate life and health insurance, and employer sponsored retirement plans, all of which enhance an organization's chances of retaining an employee when competing with competitors offering similar compensation and benefit packages (Michael et al., 2016).

The ability to attract and retain quality employees has also been shown to be positively influenced by training and development, which is comprised of a systematic process aimed at enhancing and developing employee abilities, skills, and knowledge bases with the intent of increasing an organization's effectiveness and productivity (Fletcher et al., 2018). These practices, as implemented by the human resources department, assist in creating an environment of continual learning and skill development, and by strengthening the social exchange bonds

between worker and supervisor, enhance retention levels due to perceived employee support in development and enhanced continuance commitment (Fletcher et al., 2018). Training and development, which provides employees the opportunity to develop and acquire valuable resources has been shown to elicit an obligatory response within employees, creating a perceived mandate to repay the investment made in the employee's career development and resultant prospects (Fletcher et al., 2018).

Retention is necessarily a serious consideration for companies seeking to remain profitable, as failing to retain employees for the long term, or through completion of a particular project, subjects the organization to the costs of both replacing and retraining the departed employee, as well as the decrease in productivity during this process and the loss of corporate knowledge the employee takes to the new employer (Bibi et al., 2017). The loss is felt especially hard when the employee is a good performer, is highly talented, or possesses exceptional skills or experience that are difficult to replace; often these losses can be prevented by the proper implementation of compensation packages and promotional opportunities, generating loyalty and enhancing retention (Bibi et al., 2017). While both compensation and promotion opportunities have been identified as increasing retention, in flat organizations, with little room for advancement, compensation and benefits become the primary motivator, and insecurity generated by potential changes in these attributes can become the motivating factor in seeking employment elsewhere.

Related Studies

When conducting qualitative research, investigators seek the answers to questions dealing with the how, what, and why of a particular phenomenon being observed, utilizing language, oral or written, as its data points, and including a variety of other sources, such as videos, photos, or

other memorializing materials gathered via interviews, observations, or questionnaires (Haven & Van Grootel, 2019). Using an emergent design, qualitative research attempts to reveal perspectives and perceptions of participants or subjects by combining data collection with data analysis; such flexibility can add to the strength and rigor of the study, increasing validity (Haven & Van Grootel, 2019). One of qualitative research's strongest assets is its flexible design, using the collected data in a cyclic manner to influence how the interpretation evolves moving forward, and using that data to generate additional research questions and further develop hypotheses, and allowing enlargement of the participant pool or expansion of field research until saturation is reached (Haven & Van Grootel, 2019).

Qualitative research includes a range of methodologies including phenomenology, ethnography, narrative inquiry, grounded theory, and process and action research, all of which employ richness of data in order to build theory, often by utilizing participant experiences, described in rich detail and evaluated to provide a comprehension of complex phenomena (Shufutinsky, 2020). Interpretivism of data will imbue outcomes with the influences of the researcher's social constructs, resulting in outcomes and data which will vary dependent upon the characteristics of the investigator and study participants, leading to less repeatability dissimilar to the replicability of quantitative research (Shufutinsky, 2020). The types of experiences related by study subjects are affected by sociality and temporality, influenced by transition and time, space, and the sociological geography of each individual, as well as the timing and location of interviews, experiences, and social interactions between participant and researcher, which tends to be introduced into study data and interpretation, and affects theory generation and analysis, often leading to concerns about confirmation and other biases (Shufutinsky, 2020). Obviously not an exact science, researchers engaged in qualitative research

need to attempt to limit pre-supposed determinations, often using a practice known as bracketing, whereby a researcher consciously seeks to identify and nullify his or her known prejudices and pre-judgements (Creswell, 2014).

Qualitative research, relying on inductive theorizing and qualitative data, is significantly different from the numerical data of quantitative research which can be added, subtracted, transformed, analyzed, and manipulated into data displays (Bansal et al., 2018). While various types of qualitative research data can be synthesized and digitized, and even manipulated and counted, it must first be interpreted by the researcher to identify insights and patterns before inductive theorizing is applied, allowing research to proceed down new paths and often generating completely novel theories and ideas (Bansal et al., 2018). When studying relatively new or previously understudied contexts, where there is little pre-existing research, investigators frequently are able to discern fresh perspectives and a rich breadth of new insights which would be inaccessible if solely applying the deductive logic and reasoning of the quantitative approach (Bansal et al., 2018).

Qualitative research also differs from quantitative research in its ability to enjoin diverse perspectives, such as by providing a description of observed phenomena, by viewing subjects in their environment, or collecting their perceptions through participant accounts, collecting data through diaries or individual interviews (Lanka et al., 2021). Not only does this type of process add value to individual communications, by using qualitative sampling methods, the researcher is able to synthesize interpretations into a better understanding of the participant's reality (Lanka et al., 2021). This development of knowledge from rich descriptions of observed phenomena allows the researcher to either validate existing theories, or to provide a basis for modifying extant beliefs to obtain a better understanding of the variables under study (Lanka et al., 2021).

Quantitative research is viewed as being able to replicate a reality in the form of collected and analyzed data, with a focus on scientific methods believed to be both reliable, repeatable, and valid (Barnham, 2015). This type of research seeks to understand the answer to “what” type questions in the search for facts that can then be analyzed and conclusions to be drawn from that data; qualitative research instead tries to answer the “why” questions of behavior, by developing a description or representation which corresponds to the perceptions of study subjects and, while using smaller sample sizes, delivers a deeper analysis of participants actual beliefs (Barnham, 2015). By utilizing qualitative methodologies such as triangulation, melding differing time frames, samples, and research approaches, adherents to qualitative research can increase confidence in the validity of their findings and develop theories, that when generated and refined, result in more effectively explaining the observed reality (Barnham, 2015).

As this literature review has revealed, there have been multitudinous studies and research endeavors initiated to determine employee motivations, attitudes, and reactions to various aspects of the work environment and managerial policies. While there are a number of case studies examining employees in the public sector, none were discovered dealing specifically with defense contractors and the impacts of recurring contract re-competes.

Hasoo and Akbay (2020) studied the motivational aspects among public sector employees in Iraq, identifying certain factors including training and development, education, justice, and job security as being among those that affect employee motivation. They identified employee motivation as a key tenet in an organization’s ability to achieve goals and activate desired outcomes, stating motivation is the most complicated facet of employee management, yet, is required to be maintained at high levels to increase efficiency and productivity (Hassoo & Akbay, 2020). Their study found correlations existed between motivation and job satisfaction

based on employee levels of education and perception of job status, while determining less impact from other traits such as gender, age, or salary. They also determined factors such as recognition of employee efforts and other forms of appreciation were also significant factors in stimulating employees towards pursuing organizational goals with renewed dedication and energy (Haven & Van Grootel, 2019).

A study of members of higher education faculty members also revealed motivation could be positively impacted by a wide range of different opportunities, including prospects of promotion, increases in non-salary perquisites and benefits, improved working conditions, and opportunities to participate in managerial decision making (Stachowska & Czaplicka-Kozłowska, 2019). These types of motivating factors were found to shape workers' attitudes towards job performance and employer relations, improve task completion quality, and increase willingness to fully cooperate with company policies (Stachowska & Czaplicka-Kozłowska, 2019). On the opposite end of the motivational spectrum, the researchers identified a number of de-motivational aspects, including bureaucratic leadership styles, inadequate remuneration, and job insecurity as the top contenders for job dissatisfaction (Stachowska & Czaplicka-Kozłowska, 2019).

A study dealing with issues similar to those being researched here examined the effect of restructuring on employee motivation and well-being. The researchers observed restructuring has become common in both public and private organizations, and while downsizing of the workforce is common, this usually fails to provide improvements in financial performance or worker productivity, with negative effects on employees due to the downsizing the likely culprit (de Jong et al., 2016). One of the key negative aspects of downsizing, which may account for most of the adverse effects, is an increase in job insecurity for employees, with undesirable

impacts on employee safety and mental health (de Jong et al., 2016). Although some employees reported positive changes in job satisfaction and work attitudes due to restructuring, in many instances restructuring, with or without accompanying downsizing, resulted in diminished productivity in both the short and long term, although some movement back towards baseline was seen over time unless the corporation engaged in multiple restructuring efforts or over an extended period of time (de Jong et al., 2016).

Anticipated and Discovered Themes

Several themes emerged from the articles and data examined while developing this literature review. The three motivational theories scrutinized previously continued to hold as valid when applied to worker motivations and de-motivations based on a variety of employment conditions. Employees rely on a plethora of inputs to determine their perceptions of the employment environment, and when finding them cast in a positive light, they put forth their best efforts, rewarding the company with increased productivity and efficiency due to enhanced job satisfaction. When the opposite is true, whether due to changes in work requirements, safety, or management and company policy changes, workers may engage in counter-productive behavior, including work slowdowns, sabotage, or ultimately choosing to depart the company for alternative employment opportunities.

All of these aspects can be impacted by contract re-competes. Government contracting can be complex, and the bidding and contract award procedures do not always result in situations conducive to employee satisfaction. Certain contract vehicles, such as lowest cost, technically acceptable bidding, are detrimental to the workforce, as these types of agreements routinely result in cuts to compensation, benefits, or the overall workforce. While best-value propositions alleviate some of these concerns, they are not a panacea, and can also negatively impact the

workforce. Regardless of the type of contract vehicle employed, the re-compete process is a stressful time for defense contractors and can potentially impact their dedication to the organization's values and objectives, decreasing customer value, and potentially resulting in employee turnover. If forecast budget cuts materialize in the upcoming fiscal cycles, defense contractors will once again find themselves facing uncertainty at each new round of contract negotiations.

Summary of the Literature Review

This literature review summarized the relevant body of knowledge available on government contracting, employee motivation, and theories of motivation. Because of the complexity of government contracting, including requirements for SBA set-asides, there is often no guarantee of the incumbent contract holder retaining the contract, and even if the incumbent's bid is successful, it may often require changes in employee remuneration and benefits, leading to employee dissatisfaction, lowered morale, and often turnover. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Herzberg's Motivation Hygiene (Two-Factor) Theory, and Lee and Mitchell's Unfolding Model of Turnover all support the concepts behind employee motivation, the roles and requirements of management, and the rationales as to how and why employees act and react to changes in their work environment. Some of those changes may be due to policies enacted as a result of a contract re-compete. This study examined the potential impacts and rationales behind employee behavior in response to these government mandated procedures.

This study was conducted utilizing a case study methodology, as that was found to be the most appropriate method for conducting research into an ongoing business enterprise. By focusing on the experiences of defense contractors who have undergone at least one contract re-compete, a detailed description of perceptions and behaviors was compiled and analyzed to yield

research objectives. Fifteen individuals, involved in both production and management, from contracting companies and the government, were interviewed, recording their experiences in the periods directly preceding and following a contract re-compete to examine how attitudes, perceptions, and performance were affected by the contracting process.

Three previously completed case studies were analyzed for comparisons to the goals of this study. While not directly on point, they revealed how various aspects of the work environment, including leadership and managerial policies, affect employee motivation. They also looked at both intrinsic and extrinsic factors to help understand what drives employees to produce at the highest levels for their organizations, or what tends to de-motivate employees and reduce participation. A somewhat similar study, dealing with restructuring, examined how downsizing impacted both employees and overall company productivity negatively in the long run.

Summary of Section 1 and Transition

To briefly summarize, an examination of government contracting procedures and the various contracting vehicles was undertaken to provide a basis for examining potential impacts to the contractor workforce. Several motivational theories were investigated to assist in explaining the causation and impact of periodic contract re-competes on the defense contractor workforce. These included Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Herzberg's Motivation Hygiene (Two-Factor) Theory, and Lee and Mitchell's Unfolding Model of Turnover. Additional discussion was allocated to various topics pertaining to employee performance and retention. The literature reviewed highlighted and discussed these subjects in detail, revealing much of the motivation behind employee reaction to periodic re-competes. A discussion of qualitative research outlined the processes and limitations of such an approach. Additionally, key terms were defined, and

assumptions, limitations, and delimitations were analyzed for their impact on the research project. A review of similar research projects was conducted and summarized to support and contrast with this study.

Section 2: The Project

This project attempted to understand the impacts of recurring Department of Defense contract re-competes on the contractor workforce, focused on how and why contractors might be affected by these periodic events. In collecting and analyzing data, an emerging design was used; specifically, a case study methodology was utilized to understand the experiences of contract personnel. The study examined the experiences of defense contractors who have undergone at least one contract re-compete while employed by a company supporting government efforts. Defense contractors included in the study were comprised mostly of prior active-duty personnel, with most having completed a multi-decade career prior to retirement. The target audience also contained some former government civilians and members of academia, as well as management professionals and government contracting experts. Collected data consisted of interviews and observations; phone interviews were predominant due to pandemic concerns. Section 2 of this study is comprised of research efforts, participant, and observer roles, as well as methodologies and study designs. This section also describes the participant population, how interviews were conducted, and data obtained, and the methods for analyzing and recording study results.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to add to the body of knowledge about defense contracting attributes by examining the impacts and causations of periodic defense contract re-competes on the contractor workforce regarding the effects on employee morale, productivity, job satisfaction, and retention. Creswell and Poth (2018) described a case study as where an in-depth understanding is developed by studying a system bounded by time and place. This in-depth case study focused on current and former defense contractors that have experienced the impact of a contract re-compete one or more times, with emphasis on the period

immediately preceding and following contract award and exploring how this transitional period affected those employees. It is important to determine the true cost to the government, contract companies, and their employees, of awarding contracts to the lowest bidder, at the expense of employee performance, and retention of qualified and experienced defense contractors.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher's role is of paramount importance, serving as observer, collector, and analyzer of data, while being both a bridge and a shield to study participants. Among the researcher's duties are identifying study participants, setting up and conducting interviews, collecting, and analyzing data, and ultimately drawing conclusions about the nature and validity of the project. As a researcher, and having formerly been a defense contractor, I will need to engage in a process known as bracketing, where I will set aside any preconceived notions and biases in order to obtain a non-prejudiced view of participant experiences and observations (Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004). The researcher also served as the primary study instrument while utilizing a number of tools and methods to collect and analyze data. Having successfully obtained sufficient data for analysis, the researcher collated and interpreted information to understand the experiences of the study subjects, as well as relating them to the research questions and the theories of motivation.

Data were collected through interviews and observations focused on the experiences of defense contractors who have undergone at least one contract re-compete. When appropriate, additional questions or follow-up interviews were pursued, to ensure results were fully vetted and validated. A semi-structured interview methodology was utilized in an attempt to ensure consistency throughout the research project. Research subjects were fully advised of the purpose, method, and rationale for the study, ensuring participation was fully informed. Once all

interviews were completed and data collection was complete, transcriptions of the interviews were prepared, verified, and coded for analysis through the NVivo qualitative software program, which is specifically designed to assist in developing themes and insights in studies conducted using open ended surveys and semi-structured interviews.

Research Methodology

Research methods are often divided into quantitative and qualitative methods, both of which are based on scientific methods of inquiry; quantitative studies are focused more on measurements and statistical analysis, while qualitative inquiries examine aspects of understanding and human perception (Stake, 2010). Qualitative research places the observer in the current environment, utilizing visual and aural cues to interpret experiences and bring the world into view, as well as understanding the experiences of the research study participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Case studies have been defined in various ways, including an exploration of a particular policy, project, institution, system, or program from multiple perspectives, and being inclusive of a variety of methods, including evidence-based observations, and with the goal of ultimately generating an in-depth understanding of the facets being studied (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Case study is the preferred method when several criteria are met, including when the main research inquiries are being based on “why” or “how” type questioning, when the observer has little to no actual control over the circumstances being investigated, and when such phenomenon are regarded from a contemporary viewpoint as opposed to a historical one (Yin, 2014). This study was focused on an examination of the experiences of defense contractors involved in a contemporary situation; that of ongoing periodic contract re-competes and sought to understand why and how this phenomenon potentially impacted those employees in terms of morale, job satisfaction, retention, and productivity.

Discussion of Flexible Design

The study methodology utilized a flexible design using a qualitative method; specifically, a case study design was used. This study examined the experiences of government defense contractors who were subjected to periodic contract re-competes. Qualitative research differs from the data and statistical analysis driven quantitative method in that it is based on observation coupled with interpretation to derive inductive conclusions (Cecez-Kecmanovic et al., 2020). The qualitative approach is also one in which the meanings that groups or individuals ascribe to an experience takes primacy over data driven collection (Creswell, 2014). For the issues that were studied here, documentation and interpretation of contractor experiences and actions in the period just prior to and shortly after contract award were critical in deriving understanding of motivation and resultant behaviors. Utilizing a qualitative approach allowed for the development of rich narrative detail and the creation of fresh insights and discovery, moving into new or alternative research methods (Cecez-Kecmanovic et al., 2020). This type of discovery and detail advanced new ways of seeing things and aided in the interpretation of contractor behavior and how they reacted to the stress of recurring contract re-competes. Most qualitative research efforts adopt inductive type reasoning, in which the researcher extracts statements or themes from the study participants, which can then be synthesized and summarized to derive meaning (Pearse, 2019). This method is appropriate for the proposed study, as observations and interviews of current and former contractors provided the basis for understanding their personal experiences based on the researcher's interpretations of collected data within the context of the natural environment of the problem being studied.

Discussion of Method

Qualitative research enlists a plethora of instruments, including technical skills required to gather sufficient quantities of data, and negotiator skills to develop and navigate relationships in the field, identifying and removing personal biases, approaching and solving such ethical issues as might arise, and complying with a multitude of institutional review board restrictions and requirements that are not always conducive to conducting qualitative research (Cox, 2012). In spite of those obstacles, qualitative case study offered benefits particular to the real-life events and issues to be studied here; contemporary events over which the observer has no impact, similar to a historical perspective, but with the added advantage of direct observation and the ability to interview and analyze the subjects involved in the events (Yin, 2014). Case studies allow the researcher to develop a detailed understanding of a complex event or issue, program, process, or single or multiple persons, by collecting data and making observations over a sustained period bounded by the observable activity and time constraints (Creswell, 2014). This study, based on potential impacts generated by recurring contract re-competes, examined the decisions and actions those employees undertook in response to these actions, limited to the two-year period preceding and subsequent to the contracting process.

Case studies may be designed to analyze single or multiple instances of the phenomenon being observed, and generally fall into four uses or designs; descriptive or holistic, to develop theory or generate hypothesis, to test theory or hypothesis, or to develop normative theory (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Of these, the most suitable was the descriptive case study design, which has as its objective to develop and archive as complete a record of the phenomenon as possible, for interpretation and evaluation of scholars and policy makers, or to give a voice to the study participants who might otherwise be disadvantaged, marginalized, or excluded (Denzin &

Lincoln, 2018). The development and conducting of a case study and its requisite design incorporate processes which include inquiry, interpretation, and analytical mechanisms propagated to generate a deep understanding of the program, process, or event under investigation (Creswell, 2014). Normally bounded by a particular process, activity, or time period, case studies focus on one or more individuals during a defined phenomenon or event (Stake, 2010). One of the more important aspects of case study investigations is to clearly identify units of analysis and boundaries, in this instance with the study being time bound to the periods immediately before and after a contract re-compete, and the study participants limited to those directly involved, including contractors, management, and contracting professionals (Pathirana et al., 2020). This qualitative case study examined the behavioral aspects of defense contractor employees as influenced by recurring contract re-competes in order to better understand how these employees were potentially impacted and what the overall effect was on contract execution and customer deliverables. The case study process included collection and analysis of data through interviews and other observable occurrences, data aggregation and analysis, and eventual publication of results, allowing affected parties to share and benefit from the study results (Yin, 2014). By targeting those individuals both maximally involved and also most likely to be impacted by these recurring events, the researcher was able to gather information and analyze data pertinent to the issues being examined, and that best explained the perspectives of study participants.

Discussion of Methods for Triangulation

Triangulation is a method utilized by researchers to validate their research findings and increase trust in the study's results. Researchers use a variety of data sources, including interviews, field notes, questionnaires, and archival documents, to increase confidence in the

study by removing individual bias and compensating for limited data points (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Triangulation also assists the researcher in validating themes which emerge during the analysis phase by cross referencing varied data sources with information acquired during the interview process (Yin, 2014). Triangulation was appropriate in a qualitative study such as this one, utilizing participant interviews as a primary data source, while adding rich detail and validation through acquisition and analysis of supporting material. This study properly included observations, interviews, and a variety of other sources obtained throughout the process to create a holistic view enhanced by data triangulation. In doing so, the researcher increased confirmability of data, improving reliability and validity, while providing an audit trail allowing follow-on researchers to recreate much of the initial data if desired to ensure repeatability.

Summary of Research Methodology

A qualitative case study design was determined to be the most appropriate method due to the desirability of studying a contemporary phenomenon while observing and understanding study participant perspectives in order to answer research questions based on interactions within a defined, time constrained system. The particular phenomenon being examined was that of the experiences of defense contractors subjected to recurring contract re-competes and the resultant potential impacts of these periodic events on employee morale, job satisfaction, and productivity. The class of participants included defense contractors who have recently experienced a contract re-compete, as well as their immediate management counterparts, and the government contracting personnel involved in soliciting, bidding, and awarding such contracts. Utilizing a case study methodology allowed for a scientific approach resulting in a detailed examination of the study participants' perspectives while fully exploring the requirements as manifested in the research questions.

Participants

There are several different participant categories and groups of actors who provided perspectives illuminating the impacts of contract re-competes. First and foremost were the defense contractors themselves who have experienced at least one contract re-compete, as they were the primary focus of this study and provided insights into how these recurring events affected morale, productivity, and retention. The second category included contract management, as the program manager, deputy program manager, and task order leads provided insights from the management perspective of the impacts of contract re-competes on the defense contractor workforce. The final group of actors, which although limited in size, had an outsized impact on final contract negotiations, and provided needed detail and perspective into the contracting process. These are the contracting officers, who worked daily within the intricacies of government contracting, and provided insight into the different contract vehicles, when they were employed, and how different financial arrangements impacted contracting companies and ultimately their employees.

The following groups and individual actors provided the basis for collecting the required data due to their experiences as contractors, supervisory personnel, and government contracting personnel during multiple defense contract re-compete cycles. Each of these groups provided a unique perspective, as potential impacts were different for affected personnel. By collecting the various points of view, a more holistic appraisal of potential impacts was compiled, ultimately creating a more thorough analysis of the contract re-compete process.

USSOCOM Joint Collective Training (JCT), MacDill Air Force Base, FL. JCT has a large number of defense contractor personnel, most of whom have been through one or more contract re-competes, and some of whom have served in contract positions internationally.

Additionally, the JCT contract management team includes a program manager, deputy program manager, and several task-order leads who provided a different perspective from the management side of the process. This organization has been through several re-competes spanning multiple organizational changes and geographical locations, with the potential to provide a rich level of detail for analysis.

USSOCOM Concept Development and Integration (CDI), MacDill Air Force Base, FL. CDI also has a significant number of defense contractors as well as a task-order lead, all of whom recently underwent a contract re-compete. The CDI employment base provided a different perspective as the location and core group of employees has been relatively unchanged for a number of years, although they have also endured organizational changes. Several of these employees have also made the transition from active-duty military to contractor personnel within this organization, which provided additional insight into challenges faced by the perceptions of decreased responsibility and trust often encountered by defense contractors.

Special Operations Command Central Command (SOCCENT), MacDill Air Force Base, FL. SOCCENT provided additional defense contract personnel and has a higher percentage of contractors that have recently been employed internationally and have experienced contract re-competes. Some of these contractors offered unique perspectives, as they were frequently called upon to deploy overseas, including during contract re-compete periods. Furthermore, these contractors have been engaged in areas of active conflict, which gave rise to additional stresses in their employment conditions.

General Services Administration, Region 4 Federal Acquisition Service, Robins Air Force Base, GA. Federal government contracting officials provided a wealth of information on how defense contracts are proffered, bid, and awarded, as well as the different varieties of

contracts. These individuals also offered informed opinions as to the future direction contract bidding might take in response to budgetary pressures. They also contributed to a holistic analysis of contract re-compete cycles as they negotiated multiple defense contracts throughout the annual fiscal cycle.

Ultimately, these groups provided 15 participants, including 10 defense contractor line employees, three contractor management personnel, and two government contracting professionals. Of this group of participants, most were male, with only one female participant, most were retired or former military members, and most held college degrees, with the majority holding higher degrees as well. While not considered to be critical to the research results, ages ranged from mid-thirties to mid-sixties, and included a wide variety of ethnicities, reflecting the general population.

Required documents for gaining access to participants included an Institutional Review Board approval letter, an interview protocol invitation letter, and a participant consent form. Project members were assured of the confidentiality of interview responses to ensure free and frank discussions. Protection of study participants was a paramount concern, and all data collected was secured in password protected files, with identities of subjects concealed. Each subject was fully informed of the voluntary nature of study participation and assured of the right to terminate interviews and further involvement at any time. All participants were provided an interview consent form which included the parameters of the interview and rights of the subjects. Interviews were recorded and transcribed, after which the participants were given the opportunity to review transcripts for accuracy. At that point, the audio files were subsequently deleted. Research data were restricted to dissertation committee members only, and all study data will be deleted upon completion of this project and publication of the dissertation.

Population and Sampling

This section delineates the sampling and population selection methodologies that were utilized in determining both population members and sampling size appropriate for the type of academic research being undertaken here. The sample population was defined and identified for analysis purposes. Sampling methodology was described and defended, which included the sampling frame utilized, including methodology concepts and references. The sample size underwent similar scrutiny. To be included as study participants, individuals needed to meet prescribed criteria, which were developed here, and served as the basis to include or reject population members. These criteria were based on the proposed research questions, and participants in the study were chosen based on how well they might contribute to fully answering the queries forming the basis for this investigation.

Discussion of Population

For the purposes of qualitative research, a target population consists of the entire group of potential research study participants that fall within the purview of the research questions. Logistical and cost restraints impose limitations on the researcher's ability to adequately survey an entire population, as does the trend of decreasing responsiveness from target populations (Lu & Franklin, 2018). Decreasing response rates to survey efforts have been correlated to increases in study result biases when it can be demonstrated the nonresponse rate is not random, an issue which can be somewhat countermanded by increasing sample size as long as the associated elevated expense can be tolerated (Pforr et al., 2015). Researchers have been trained to utilize three different methods when developing study participant listings, including population studies, convenience sampling, and random sampling methodologies, with each presenting its own difficulties and validity issues which may make the study less generalizable to the population as

a whole (Lu & Franklin, 2018). One method which can provide the desired level of generalizability is the use of proxy populations, as long as the researcher ensures the individuals selected as members of the proxy possess attributes similar to the population as a whole (Lu & Franklin, 2018). Additionally, researchers must be aware that having developed a sampling frame and having assured compliance with proposed participant entry and exclusion mandates is not sufficient in and of itself to ensure completely valid data, as the population can never be fully surveyed, and samples are never completely representative (Keiding & Louis, 2016). As such, the population for this study consisted of all currently and previously employed defense contractors who have recently undergone a contract re-compete.

Discussion of Sampling

Having identified the relevant population, the next step was to narrow it down to a subset that could be readily studied, but that also helped the researcher to understand the identified problem and answer the proposed research questions (Creswell, 2014). To guarantee study validity, it was essential that sampling members were chosen in a manner which ensured the sample accurately portrayed the entire population (Barreiro & Albandoz, 2001). Once a sample has been identified and surveyed, the data may be aggregated into a small number of themes (Creswell, 2014). Validity also requires the selection method to be clearly defined and the sample size to be adequate. In qualitative research, it is valid to utilize a relatively small sample size, collecting non-numerical data which is then used to conduct an in-depth investigation through inductive reasoning and interpretation (Rahman et al., 2020). For this study, the members of the sample were those defense contractors which participated and were interviewed by the researcher, and whose answers provided the basis for analysis and study conclusions. Proper selection of the sample should also provide a degree of reliability, while use of a non-

appropriate sample selection can induce errors into study conclusions. These types of errors are typically found to include bias by the interviewer, or the failure or inability of research subjects to objectively answer questions posed during the interview process; these are categorized as selection errors or non-answer errors (Barreiro & Albandoz, 2001). Sampling techniques include non-probability sampling, where participants are chosen utilizing non-random selection criteria and not all individual members are considered for inclusion, purposive sampling, in which the researcher attempts to make the chosen sample representative of the population, and no-rule sampling, which can be used when the population is homogeneous, and selection bias is not present (Barreiro & Albandoz, 2001). Sample size must also be considered as a measure to ensure accurate population representation, with a goal of data saturation while avoiding over-sampling and repetitive data; the quality, repeatability, and precision of the study can be negatively influenced when sample sizes are inappropriate by being either inadequate for the population being studied, or excessive, leading to unwarranted expense and processing for little to no gain in reliability (Ahmad & Halim, 2017). Up to 25 contractors were desired to be interviewed, focusing on their perceptions and actions during these events, and the context of how it has affected them, which was considered a sufficient number to allow data to reach saturation (Creswell, 2014). Contractors were chosen to participate in this study under non-probability sampling, which limits the selection criteria, allowing for greater ease of access, with a focus on contractors currently or previously employed at USSOCOM, USCENTCOM, or SOCCENT. These contractors were selected as a proxy population due to the unique requirements of the research questions as well as geographical availability, without regard to other factors such as race, gender, ethnicity, or age. The researcher employed purposive sampling, utilizing the researcher's expertise in this area to select contractors most likely to have

had the experiences necessary in fulfilling the research goals. To provide additional context and validity, a small number of management and contracting personnel were included in the study as well.

Summary of Population and Sampling

Participants in this study met the established criteria of being current or former defense contractors who had recently undergone a contract re-compete. The relevant research population consisted of all defense contractors meeting those established standards. As there is little concern of sampling bias, eligible contractors were selected based on geographical availability without regard to socio-economic or other factors and influenced by the researcher's impression of each participant's ability to contribute to the project's successful completion. Participants were queried on their willingness to fully and freely participate in the study, thus limiting the impact of no-response errors. By utilizing these procedures, selected participants were most likely to provide the desired data required to satisfactorily answer the proposed research questions.

Data Collection and Organizing

Qualitative researchers collect multiple types of data including numerical measurements, observations, both direct and indirect, conversations and transcripts, and even text messages which can be used to analyze and clarify what is going on in the study environment and ultimately answer the research questions (Hyder et al., 2019). This data were collected from a variety of sources, including both institutional and personal sources, primarily during everyday transactions, requiring the observer to integrate the day-to-day activities of the study subjects into the observation plan, as the researcher did not control the study environment, as might be the case in other types of studies (Yin, 2014). As data were collected, it generally fell into one of two categories, interpretive data which has immediate relevance for the researcher, and aggregative

data, which only begins to make sense when combined with other data (Stake, 2010). This study aimed to contribute to the literature on employee motivation by examining the impacts of recurring contract re-competes on defense contractor personnel. The collected data were analyzed and interpreted to expose the real-world context of the observed phenomena.

Well-structured data collection assists the researcher in the effort to collect, analyze, and report on data obtained from a variety of sources. Purposeful data collection serves a number of ends, including ensuring data are collected ethically and with full participant knowledge and permission, sampling is well designed to accurately reflect the target population, and information is organized and securely stored (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Research questions were carefully designed to ensure respondents had the freedom to answer fully and accurately, as the researcher's questions could have constrained participants' behavior and affected the outcome of the study (Yin, 2014). Data collection did not consist solely of participants' answers to semi-structured research questions, but also contained the researcher's field notes and summaries of observations. Participants were also selected based on their suitability for being able to knowledgeably answer the designed research questions in order to provide the type of rich qualitative information and data necessary to build an understanding of the study's stated goals (Maramwidze-Merrison, 2016). Due to current health constraint extant from the COVID 19 pandemic, all interviews supporting this study were conducted via telecon, limiting the researcher's ability to visually observe study participants and requiring a reliance on aural cues.

In addition to participants' responses to semi-structured interview questions, additional detail was provided by researcher observations. As previously noted, the opportunity to conduct in person interviews and record visual observations was limited due to pandemic restrictions.

However, the researcher still gleaned substantial information from tone of voice, eagerness or hesitancy in participant answers, or reluctance or refusal to answer certain questions.

Data Collection Plan

As this study focused on the impacts of recurring contract re-competes on the defense contractor workforce, it was appropriate to gather data for analysis through semi-structured interviews using open-ended questions. Of the three types of interviews, structured, semi-structured, and unstructured, semi-structured allowed the participant to focus on the interview questions while still providing opportunities to develop rich details whilst providing free flowing responses (Creswell, 2014). Interviews are normally recorded, transcribed, and reviewed along with any field notes and observations, and eventually highlighted, coded, and analyzed through a data base to yield and develop themes. Initial interview questions supported the overall research study objectives, while follow-up, probing questions allowed the researcher and participant to jointly develop the data necessary for analysis (Puyvelde, 2018). Collected data, such as that gathered using structured interviews, only exhibits its true value after analysis by organizing and filtering to show trending observations, make useful predictions, and provide products which can enhance understanding and perspective (Green, 2020). Data can be collected by various methods, including primary research such as by conducting structured interviews with study participants having direct knowledge of the study subject matter, and by secondary research examining artifacts including contract bid offers and the bid resolution process (Jørgensen et al., 2019).

Participants in this study consisted of defense contractors who have experienced at least one contract re-compete as the primary focus, with additional illuminating perspectives supplied by management personnel and government contracting professionals. In conducting this study, the researcher made a concerted effort to avoid biases caused by prior personal involvement in

the contracting enterprise, as well as ensuring study results were not affected by a power imbalance between the observer and interviewee, resulting from perceptions of superiority in positioning, or based on sensitivities to due differences in age or education (Hampshire et al., 2014). The researcher and participants also developed rapport and trust during the interview process in order to facilitate a frank and deep discussion, developing common ground on which to draw rich descriptions of the potential impacts of the experience being explored (Hampshire et al., 2014). This process began with the initial contact between researcher and participant determining availability, willingness, and qualification to participate in the study and facilitated by the introduction of the consent form and recruitment letter, exhibited at Appendix B and C. Participants were assured both verbally and in writing of the confidentiality of their participation and the measures undertaken to protect their identities and responses. Having attained interest, validated which participants met study criteria, and obtained consent, interviews were conducted utilizing the interview guide exhibited at Appendix D. Due to pandemic restrictions, interviews were conducted primarily via telecon, which limited the researcher's observations to relying solely on tonal inclinations and any hesitancy in addressing issues that might be seen as sensitive or controversial. These additional data points are captured in the researcher's field notes and are recorded in the interview transcript database. Additional data were obtained by reviewing archival records, including previously issued government requests for proposals, contracting company proposals in response, and contract award documentation.

Instruments

Various instruments are available for use in qualitative research studies, including surveys propagated either online or in paper formats, interviews administered by the researcher in person, or questionnaires administered over the telephone. Proper choice is crucial to collect

the type and volume of data desired to answer the research questions. Focusing on data collection, whether by survey instrument or by interview is crucial to identifying specific stakeholder perspectives which are necessary to ensure analysis and conclusions drawn from the data are valid (Malmose, 2019). Yin (2014) specified six available collection media including archival records, documents, physical artifacts, participant observation, direct observation by the interviewer, and participant interviews. Interviews, which are commonly used in qualitative research studies, may be conducted in person, over the phone, or as a series of texts or messages exchanged over electronic means (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Often the type of interview chosen is driven by constraints such as the availability of study participants and convenience of methods of contact. Regardless of the type chosen, the interviewer becomes the primary research instrument, operating within the constraints of recording data while proposing questions, maintaining objectivity, and allowing the interviewee to express perspective without disrupting reality (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). As such, the interviewer must accept and address the probability of bias based on personally held beliefs or pet theories by acknowledging that research is rarely objective, and that study findings are a result of extended engagement with participants, continuous observation, researcher reflexivity, and finally, validation through participant checks and response authentication (Morrow, 2005). Researchers must also take care to carefully consider how participants construe meaning, utilizing several different factors, including cultural frameworks, examining contextual issues which could impact data analysis, and basing observations on active listening in order to build and maintain rapport (Morrow, 2005). By conducting interviews, researchers create a record, regarded by many as properly sourced witness accounts, which, if done correctly utilizing appropriately formulated and phrased interview questions, yields data considered to be both valid and reliable (Puyvelde, 2018).

Interviews must be conducted consistently among participants to ensure uniformity and validity, in similar semi-structured settings, and utilizing an interview guide containing open-ended interview questions. Such a guide has been developed for this study and is included at Appendix D.

Data Organization Plan

Data in and of itself have limited value. As interviews are conducted and answers tabulated in plain language formats, it becomes increasingly difficult to extract meaningful information without a user-friendly interface allowing for evidence extraction (Bruno et al., 2020). It was crucial that collected data be managed from the outset of the project initiation; otherwise, it would soon become unwieldy and impossible to sort and extract meaningful information. As previously noted, data can take many forms, including letters, texts, emails, documents, proposals, responses, direct and indirect observations, and transcribed interviews (Yin, 2014). Creswell and Poth (2018) groups data into four subsets including interviews, observations, documents, and audiovisual materials. Data collected during this particular study included observations, primarily captured in field notes, interview responses in transcribed format, and archival documents developed during the contract bid and award process. By exploiting multiple sources of data, the researcher was able to utilize triangulation, allowing the development of rich, thick descriptions, and validation of study observations. Triangulation allowed the researcher to utilize multiple methodologies and data points, such as interviews, artifacts, and field notes to develop a deeper and more holistic understanding of the context of a subject being studied (Huetteman, 1993).

The data have been collected and collated in a series of electronic folders on a password protected computer with access limited to the researcher, and upon validated request, to the

members of the dissertation committee. This is partly due to ethical concerns with collected data encompassing privacy issues, power differentials, trust and validity of data, and ownership of the data, which was mitigated by proper design of the study, full disclosure to participants of study guidelines, and pre-planned data security measures. Each interview was recorded digitally by a primary and secondary device, transcribed, validated by the participant, and securely stored on the research computer. Field notes were added at the end of each transcription. Participants' actual names and pseudonyms were recorded on a password protected spreadsheet to ensure confidentiality. This process provided for a logical framework, documentation of sources, and availability of data for forensic auditing if required.

Summary of Data Collection and Organization

The selected participants for this study were defense contractors who have undergone at least one contract re-compete, supplemented with observations and interviews of contract management personnel and government contracting professionals. Data were collected by the use of semi-structured interviews utilizing open-ended questions, field notes, observations, and various artifacts related to the defense contracting field. Invitations were issued to participants based on pre-determined criteria, accompanied by a recruitment letter and a consent form which clearly delineated the purpose of the study, expectations of the participants, and steps taken to ensure confidentiality and safeguarding of data. Participant interviews were scheduled in-person or via telecon, with assurance the consent form was signed prior to interview initiation. Interviews were conducted utilizing the same open-ended questions for each participant, with follow-up questions which were both pre-scripted and free flowing based on participant responses. The researcher used an interview guide (Appendix D) to ensure consistency of data capture throughout the process and to eliminate bias among participant answers and

observations. Upon completion of each interview, recordings were transcribed, and each participant was given the opportunity to review and validate the completeness and accuracy of transcriptions. After review, the researcher affixed field notes to each interview for reference during the analysis phase of the project.

Data Analysis

Emergent Ideas

One of the most challenging tasks facing a qualitative researcher lies in analyzing the various sources of data, text, observations, interview transcripts, and other collected information through preliminary examinations, coding and developing themes, and finally interpreting and reporting the study results (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In addition to dealing with the possibilities of too much, too little, or the wrong types of data, researchers must also be capable of storing, sorting, and analyzing the data they have collected. Documentation for case study research generally falls into two distinct types of collections, data as collected during execution of the study, and the resultant analytical report, in either oral or written format (Yin, 2014). Data analysis comprises several steps, which may be occurring concurrently, such as transcribing, coding and analyzing interviews, while other interviews are ongoing, drafting memos for inclusion in the final product, and winnowing data into smaller numbers of themes, to focus the study on the rich detail necessary to draw conclusions and aggregate the data into usable dimensions (Creswell, 2014). This can be challenging, because of the open-ended nature of qualitative research, resulting in some uncertainty as the research process is inherently flexible, and can be subjected to bias in interpretation from the researcher due to direct involvement in the research effort (Mayer, 2015). Data analysis is only one of several steps that may occur simultaneously throughout the qualitative research process but is a step that retains vital

importance as its proper execution plays a major role in determining the overall results of the of the study, and may rise to prominence in the effort, or become intertwined with the collection effort, dissimilar to quantitative efforts (Mayer, 2015). After collection has begun, or in some cases been completed, data are broken down into the three major components of data analysis in a qualitative study: data display, reduction, and drawing and verifying conclusions (Punch, 2009). A major part of the analysis, data reduction, occurs continually throughout the process, and is accomplished by summarizing and editing, memoing, and coding, and eventually explaining and conceptualizing, all with a common goal of reducing the quantity of inputs without compromising the information obtained from the data (Mayer, 2015).

As this study was focused on the experiences of defense contractors who have recently undergone a contract re-compete and dealt with issues that are of a current and ongoing nature, a case study was an appropriate approach and methodology to study these issues. The exact nature of this study dealt with potential changes in behavior and motivation among defense contractors, seeking to understand if, how, and why contract re-competes affect personnel morale, job satisfaction, performance, and retention. The research questions were drafted in a manner to collect the data required for this study, using a semi-structured interview process with potential follow-up questions, to allow the researcher to collect the types of data required, while partially constraining participants to maintain focus and center responses to the issues at hand. As data were collected, archived, and analyzed, themes were developed allowing the researcher to organize data and utilize inductive reasoning to develop theories and reach conclusions to answer the research questions.

Coding Themes

The researcher considered utilizing manual or computer assisted data analysis, and selected NVivo software as a computer assisted solution to analyze and interpret collected data. NVivo is specifically designed as a tool allowing for sharing, organizing, and analyzing data, regardless of the method of research chosen. While NVivo assists the researcher to explore and manage data, as well as identifying patterns and themes, it is not designed to be a substitute for the researcher's analytical rigor and expertise. Qualitative data can be more quickly and fully organized, analyzed, and exploited utilizing purpose designed software, although the overall validity and reliability of the project's results depends in part on the skill and expertise of the researcher (Welsh, 2002). Qualitative Data Analysis Software (QDAS), such as NVivo required a steep learning curve and a dedication to practice and remain engaged with the software, but provided numerous benefits, including data management supporting triangulation, correlations in connection and relationships within the data, concurrent analysis of data, inductive insights, increased efficiencies, secure backups, and the ability to model and visualize data in different ways (Salmona & Kaczynski, 2016).

Interpretations

Analysis of reams of data collected throughout a research effort can invariably be a labor-intensive endeavor, often complicated by the insidious nature of investigator bias, but computer based qualitative data analysis software offers a means of alleviating much of the tedium, while at the same time providing methodological transparency as a means to counter appearances of bias (Dainty et al., 2000). This lends the substance of transparency and repeatability to qualitative research, supporting its validity in a field of study previously dominated by quantitative efforts. Qualitative studies often involve code-oriented analysis which helps to break

data down into themed excerpts by applying conceptual labels, which when processed through QDAS, allows for theory formation when data are rejoined in new and different ways (Dainty et al., 2000). Once data have been collected, coded, and sorted, the researcher organizes items that have been similarly coded together into groups, allowing themes to emerge and help in developing understanding (Yin, 2014). As a caveat, while using such software programs enhance the ability to represent data in intelligible ways, the researcher must take care to ensure deep insights are not lost through the curating process (Dainty et al., 2000).

Data Representation

Data in a research study is collected, organized, and analyzed, but often is unable to satisfy the requirements of validity and repeatability without being represented in a fashion which is flexible, transparent, and able to be replicated by follow-on researchers seeking to understand or expand the original effort. For data to be useful, it must be coded, organized into themes, analyzed, interpreted, and eventually displayed by the utilization of matrices, tables, or narrative in order to represent the data in a meaningful format (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Once data has been analyzed, it can be displayed in a visual model, such as in graphs or tables which support identification of themes which aid the reader in understanding how the data, as collected, analyzed, and displayed, supported the conclusions, as drawn by the researcher. Data representation is the culmination of efforts to code the data by assigning names and reducing it into meaningful fragments, consolidating the fragments into themes or broad categories, and then displaying the data through the use of comparative tables, graphs, or charts (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Data analysis software, such as NVivo, provide a means to graphically represent themes and codes developed during the analysis phase, allowing relationships to be managed, shaped,

developed, studied, and visually interpreted to build theories and draw conclusions (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Analysis for Triangulation

Triangulation in qualitative research provides the researcher with a method of improving validity by utilizing multiple data sources to present a more holistic, complete, and contextual view of the study's units of observation (Huetteman, 1993). Researchers are frequently subject to questions of bias; triangulation assists the researcher by promoting criticality in observation and analysis, increasing confidence in the conclusions and findings, and helping to impart those to readers and subsequent researchers (Huetteman, 1993). Triangulation increases confidence in the evidence that has been collected, organized, and analyzed by utilizing additional points of view, multiple sources of information, and by member checking, allowing research subjects to verify the accuracy of accumulated data, helping to reduce errors in understanding, or mistakes in transcribing from participant interviews (Stake, 2010). This study relied primarily on interviews conducted with defense contractors that have recently undergone at least one contract re-compete. Triangulation was reinforced by additional interviews with contract managers, task order leads, government contracting professionals, and review and incorporation of archival contracting documents including solicitations for bid and company proposals.

Summary of Data Analysis

Data analysis is a challenging task for the researcher due to the potentially voluminous quantities of data that might be collected, as well as the various forms of data available, which must all be collated, warehoused, coded, sorted, and ultimately characterized to develop themes and insights. After being collected and processed, data formed the backbone of the study report, which required transparency and documentation to ensure validity and repeatability. The

researcher devised a system to allow for data to be accurately assessed and managed; this was then be supplemented with the utilization of Qualitative Data Analysis Software to assist in identifying core themes by segregating data through the use of pre-determined descriptive identifiers. By applying triangulation, utilizing cluster themes, field notes, and other archival data, insights were validated adding credibility to the research study's conclusions. Researchers must take care throughout the process to ensure the results are not skewed through careless utilization of automation or the subtle creep of unconscious bias.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability

Studies can be called into question if they fail to ensure the reliability of their data and conclusions. The issue of reliability deals with the extent to which study measurements are consistent, dependable, and repeatable by other researchers seeking to reproduce the study's results using the same or similar data points (Innes & Straker, 2003). Reproducibility of the results can be assisted by utilizing protocols and formats that are standardized across multiple data sources, triangulation, and consistent data reporting designs (Innes & Straker, 2003). In addition to consistency, trustworthiness of results can also be enhanced by supporting conclusions with relevant and timely research and reference to appropriate professional literature. Reliability can be supported by close attention to four phases during the research process which include research design, data collection, analysis, and documentation, ensuring qualitative researchers maintain objectivity throughout the study process (Kirk & Miller, 1986).

Validity

Studies must also be valid, ensuring the study embraces relevance, truthfulness, and applicability, as well as appropriateness, usefulness, and meaningfulness in order for the study

results to be considered legitimate (Innes & Straker, 2003). One key method of safeguarding validity and guaranteeing a precise reflection of the phenomenon being studied is to ensure data collected is a representative sample of the problem set as a whole (Jordan, 2018). Triangulation also supports validity, by utilizing different methods as well as multiple data sources to verify the observed phenomenon, and by substantiating data through the use of member checks during which participants verified and validated that the data, as collected and reported, was accurate, allowing the researcher to gain insights into the views of study subjects while developing rich data about the participants (Jordan, 2018). This combination of multiple approaches to validation including extensive field studies, thick, detailed descriptions of study participants, accompanied by a developed closeness between the researcher and subjects, all enhanced the trustworthiness and accuracy of the study findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Bracketing

A common cause for concern in qualitative research is the possibility of data contamination from any inherent biases the researcher might bring to the study effort. One method of compensating for this deficiency is through the process known as bracketing or epoche. Bracketing requires the researcher to objectively seek to set aside previous experiences and view study data through a fresh lens, as if seeing it for the first time (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In terms of reliability and validity, bracketing, which calls for researchers to hold previous experiences and beliefs in abeyance, allows for increased confidence in the study's conclusions by limiting the impact of an investigator's pre-conceptions while serving as the primary instrument of research (Chan et al., 2013). Bracketing includes thinking utilizing reflexivity, understanding that a full and honest evaluation of the researcher's interests and values are critical to ensuring minimal impact and influence on the research project, not only

during the data collection phase and subsequent analysis, but throughout the entire process (Chan et al., 2013). As the researcher in this study previously served as a defense contractor, bracketing is crucial to ensure past experiences and insight are not allowed to corrupt or taint the investigatory process which could negatively impact the validity of the project's conclusions.

Summary of Reliability and Validity

For a study to be useful to subsequent researchers and those that seek to implement change based on project conclusions, it must be both reliable and valid. Studies that are not valid, reliable, and repeatable have little value to the academic community. In order for these characteristics to apply, the study must be of a representative body of the population as a whole, utilizing an appropriate sample size of the targeted population, and accurately reflect the data collected from study participants. These are not factors to be considered during the final analysis of data, but to be incorporated throughout the study, including during the critical design phase. Numerous attributes are seen as contributing to the validity and reliability of a study, including documentation of research questions, interviews and transcripts that seek to answer those questions, accompanied by field notes, appropriate literature references, and archival study documents. All these inputs, together, were triangulated to verify and validate the study's findings. Participants were all asked the same questions, which were then carefully transcribed, and subjected to member checking to ensure an accurate record had been achieved. Data were stored securely, and the identities of study participants were masked to prevent inadvertent disclosure. All of these procedures were essential to guarantee the study complied with the stringent requirements necessitated in the pursuit of academic research.

Summary of Section 2 and Transition

Section 2 was devoted to study design, research methodology and analysis, and describes study participants, interview questions and procedures, relevant population samples, study validity and reliability, and the purpose and purported goals of the study. This section also laid out a roadmap to conducting interviews, provided open-ended survey questions, and included procedures for collecting and collating data, attaching field notes, developing themes and messages, and ultimately drawing conclusions to answer the study's research questions. The purpose of the study was to examine the impacts of recurring contract re-competes on the defense contractor workforce as it pertains to employee morale, motivation, productivity, and retention. This was accomplished by utilizing a flexible design, incorporating semi-structured interviews, multiple data sources, computer-assisted data analysis software, and triangulation to ensure validity, repeatability, and reliability in the study conclusions. Section 3 contains the culmination of these efforts, summarizing and providing examples of the research, drawing conclusions, and describing avenues of approach for alleviating any concerns that were discovered during the research effort.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Defense contractors are, as a general rule, well informed, well trained, and schooled in operating in stressful conditions. For the most part, contractors lead a fairly placid existence, occasionally interspersed with periods of tension and turmoil created by the vagaries and the nature of the defense enterprise. Highly experienced in dealing with changing conditions and complex problem sets, defense contractors typically exhibit high level problem solving and executive decision-making skills when faced with challenging conditions. There is nothing, however, that fully prepares them for the stresses of a contract re-compete, the every-five-year exercises that determine their professional and personal futures, and during which they have little input and absolutely no control.

Overview of the Study

This study examined the impact of periodic Department of Defense contract re-competes on the defense contractor workforce, potentially causing reduced productivity (Bryant & Allen, 2013), generating worker replacement costs from losing highly skilled workers (Hester, 2013), and decreasing morale, job satisfaction and performance. Data for this flexible design case study were collected through research, including a thorough literature review, and by participant interviews, which were transcribed, collated, and analyzed utilizing NVivo software to develop emergent themes and messages. The focus of the interview and analysis process was to answer previously developed research questions and to assess the validity of selected concepts supporting the conceptual framework. While these concepts proved invaluable in developing theories and designing research questions, they failed to accurately predict all defense contractor behaviors arising as a result of the stresses of recurring re-competes. Nonetheless, study results were somewhat as expected in most areas, while major deviations from anticipated results were

observed in observations regarding productivity. Findings in the areas of morale, job satisfaction, and retention were more in keeping with concept expectations, although perceptions of the degree of impact varied widely between line employees, management, and contracting professionals. Study results ultimately revealed numerous deficits in employee behavior due to the impact of recurring contract re-competes, creating dissatisfaction, turmoil, and retention issues detrimental to flawless contract execution, and resulting in negative consequences for the customer, contracting companies, and defense contractor workforce.

Presentation of the Findings

This qualitative flexible design case study examined the stresses and impacts on the Department of Defense contractor workforce as a result of the recurring contract re-competes which are typically required on a five-year cycle. Although this was the primary focus of this study, it should be noted that additional stresses are presented annually as companies are only guaranteed performance of the initial contract year, with subsequent option years executed only with the acquiescence of the customer based on the previous year's performance. The study explored the impacts of contract re-competes on several aspects of contractor reactions to these cyclical events including job satisfaction, productivity, morale, and retention. For further clarification, the study attempted to view these issues through the differing lenses and perspective of not only defense contractor line employees, but also contractor management and government contract management and contracting professionals. To accomplish this encompassing viewpoint, the range of participants included 10 defense contractor line employees, three defense contractor management personnel, and two government contract management professionals. Among the 10 contractor line employees, nine were retired military members, and despite the overwhelming proportion of prior military in the defense contracting

field, the other one had worked as a defense contractor only, with no prior military experience. Of the contracting company management personnel, all three were retired military. The two government officials consisted of one military retiree, and one individual who had spent his entire career in the civilian government contracting corps. Such a diverse mix of backgrounds and experiences allowed the study to evaluate several widely varying perspectives and points of view regarding the effects of recurring contract re-competes.

Table 1*Study Participants*

Study Participants					
Participant Identifier	Defense Contractor	Contract Management	Government Employee	Retired Military	Civilian Only
P1	X			X	
P2	X	X		X	
P3	X			X	
P4	X			X	
P5	X			X	
P6	X			X	
P7	X			X	
P8					X
P9	X			X	
P10	X	X		X	
P11		X		X	
P12	X		X	X	
P13	X	X		X	
P14	X			X	
P15		X			X

Participants were chosen from among the resident population of defense contractors geographically available in the Tampa Bay area and which met the criteria of having recently undergone a contract re-compete. The study was focused on re-compete impacts on the contractor workforce during the periods immediately preceding and following the event. Race and gender were not considered to be relevant factors, although the group had some diversity, including males, females, and minority members. Almost 90% of the group had prior military

experience, and all but one were male and over 50 years of age. Participants were interviewed over the telephone due to pandemic restrictions, and the transcribed interviews were reviewed by each participant and vetted for accuracy. All participants received a written invitation to participate in the study and returned a signed copy prior to the discussion. Verbal confirmation was obtained as well at the initiation of each interview, which normally lasted around 20 to 30 minutes in duration.

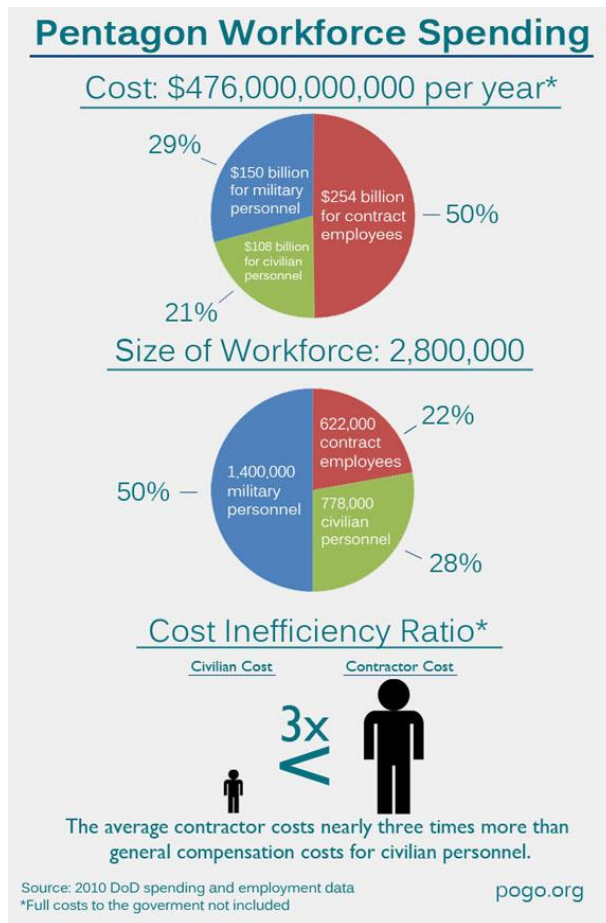
Material gathered for this study also included contract requests for proposals generated by the government to guide and solicit bids from defense contracting companies on proposed or existing projects or requirement for service. The government contracts for a wide variety of goods and services, including commercial off the shelf (COTS) items as well as many unique pieces of equipment suitable solely for military utilization and having no similar counterparts in civilian industry and manufacturing. The same can be said for many types of contracted services, in that the requisite expertise can often be only obtained through military service and experiences limited to preparing and executing contingency operations.

The U.S. government and Department of Defense (DoD) maintain an extremely large cadre of personnel consisting of active duty, reserve, and national guard service members, government civilians, and defense contractors. As the government's largest federal agency, DoD employs over 2.9 million military service members and government civilian employees in over 160 countries around the world (<https://www.defense.gov>). Additionally, DoD contracts with over 50,000 companies to supply over 650,000 full time equivalent contractor employees. One question that frequently arises deals with the cost effectiveness of utilizing a contractor workforce rather than plussing up the military or government civilian components of DoD. The main argument for utilization of contractors is flexibility and the ability to scale personnel

numbers up and down as required by operations' tempo and secondarily by budget and policy decisions. For example, United States Central Command (USCENTCOM) summarily dismissed over 700 intelligence professional contractors when the Obama administration determined to draw down forces in Iraq in 2011. Most of them were subsequently rehired as ISIS expanded its self-proclaimed caliphate, requiring re-engagement by U.S. military forces. In terms of flexibility, the use of DoD contractors clearly provides an advantage in the ability to rapidly ramp capabilities up and down as dictated by the vagaries of crisis management and contingency operations. The other major concern is the actual cost of employing contractor personnel versus the expense of hiring additional military service members or government civilians including benefits and retirement expenses. While military and government retirement benefits seem generous compared to some civilian retirement plans, the reality is that fulfilling requirements for a government or military retirement is not the normal outcome of embarking on a 20 or more-year career. In fact, only about 10% of military members qualify for active-duty retirement, and although many more will leave with Veterans Administration benefits for health and education, retirement benefits do not vest until the member has passed the 20-year mark. This all-or-none approach to military retirement has been alleviated somewhat as of late with the introduction of a 401(k)-type contribution-based retirement option that the member retains entitlement to if leaving before completing full retirement qualifications.

Defense contractors are compensated at levels commensurate with experience, demand for various types of expertise, and heavily influenced by location. Contractors in the metropolitan Washington D.C. area supporting the Pentagon and outlying military support agencies and facilities are some of the highest paid across the United States. Premium salaries can be commanded by those contractors willing to deploy and be employed in areas that are

isolated or dangerous, including areas of active armed conflict. Contractors fill a plethora of roles supporting the military and other government agencies, including support and logistics, intelligence, communications, and security. It is estimated that contractors outnumber active-duty military personnel two-to-one in most combat theaters. These contractors may be compensated at levels that seem overly generous, but the government willingly pays exorbitant rates for surge capacity reasoning that the overall risk to personnel from violence or dangerous conditions is primarily born by the contracting company. Contractors who are forward deployed must rely on their employer for any long-term medical consequences or in extreme circumstances, compensation for families from service-related mortality. In the long term, the government benefits from passing those obligations on to the defense contracting companies. As a general rule, however, defense contractors are compensated at a rate commensurate with most white-collar employees. Salaries are, however, only one component of the cost of employing contractors. Companies must also account for overhead expenses, employee benefits, and ultimately corporate profit margins. As a rule of thumb, the rate charged to the government for each full-time equivalent position is double the salary paid to the contractor. Contractors are thus an expensive proposition when compared to the cost of a comparable military or government employee. The Center for Defense Information at the Project On Government Oversight (POGO) conducted a study on the cost of DoD contractors in 2010, and found significant inefficiencies resulting in costs almost triple the expense to hire equivalent government civilians.

Figure 5.*Pentagon Workforce Spending*

The government, however, regards this simply as a cost of doing business in order to provide required goods and services at scale and volume in a timely manner, supporting operations at the speed required to respond to crisis, which is frequently unanticipated as to timing, scope, and geographic location.

As previously noted, defense contractors are predominantly former military service members who have separated or retired from active duty. While salaries and benefits can be an obvious motivator, many of these personnel seek to continue serving in roles they believe support the ideals they espoused while on active duty. They also seek to continue the sense of

camaraderie experienced as a member of the armed forces, and many evince a sense of duty or shared purpose in their new roles.

Obviously, someone recently separated from active military service requires income replacement, and a role as a defense contractor satisfies basic physiological needs as identified in Maslow's Hierarchy. Surprisingly, military retirees find themselves in a similar situation. After serving a minimum of 20 years in uniform, military members can immediately begin drawing retirement. While more generous than many extant retirement programs, a 20-year veteran only draws 50% of base pay, which is significantly less than full active duty pay, as major tax-free allowances such as housing, flight, jump, and subsistence are not considered when calculating retirement pay. The role as a defense contractor thus meets security, socialization, and self-actualization needs. Those are some of the upsides to becoming a defense contractor.

Unfortunately, there are downsides as well.

The main issue for defense contractors is job security. As previously noted, changes in contingency operations, personnel policies, or budget constraints can result in a reduction-in-force, cutting the number of full-time equivalent billets and forcing contractors to seek employment elsewhere. Contractors are also subject other pressures which sap income and benefit levels and lead to job dissatisfaction. The object of this study is to examine those pressures and effects that arise as the result of recurring contract re-competes. However, there are other occasions when company management might take advantage of circumstances to further erode wages and benefits. To understand how these situations arise, it is useful to examine the creation and evolution of a DoD contract for services. The following narrative is a combination of anecdotal and factual evidence collected by the researcher over a period of years, including during this research endeavor. A number of the participants in this study work under the

USSOCOM Enterprise-Wide Training and Education Program (UEWTEP) contract, which has been in existence in one form or another for over 20 years. A discussion of how it has evolved and how contracting companies have taken advantage of circumstances, including re-competes, to erode employee benefits and compensation in order to pad corporate coffers is useful in setting the stage for examining the impacts of recurring contract re-competes.

The initial version of the UEWTEP was negotiated in 1999 between Special Operations Command, Joint Forces Command (SOCJFCOM) and TRW, a defense contractor. SOCJFCOM was established as the training and organization entity for special operations forces under United States Joint Forces Command (USJFCOM), a four-star functional combatant command established in Norfolk, VA to transform the force through education and experimentation efforts. Focused on integration and interoperability for U.S. joint forces as well as the forces of partner and allied nations, USJFCOM eventually assumed the role as a force provider for Combatant Commands and other Joint Task Forces engaged in military activities around the globe.

The initial contract with TRW was small, starting with only two contractors, and expanding over the next several years to encompass 10 employees. Salaries were considered to be somewhat low on the national scale but were adequate for the local area. A five percent match for 401K accounts was a component of the compensation package, and medical, dental, and vision plans were available at group rates. Contractors initially provided mostly in-garrison support, assisting their military counterparts with research, seminar development and presentation rehearsals. In time, contractors began to deploy alongside their government colleagues, including into combat zones during Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom. This required most contractors to work excessive hours, well beyond the 1080 duty hours prescribed in the contract. This contract was let as a cost-plus agreement, with a set

amount for salaries and an additional pot of money to pay overtime and travel expenses on an as needed basis. Incoming new personnel were informed they should expect around 350 hours of overtime per year. TRW, as was common in the defense contractor industry, applied the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) to limit the expense of overtime hours while deployed to the government. The FLSA provides for the categorization of overtime as extended workweek (EWW) hours that were compensated at the same rate as normal hours. The employees were identified as “exempt” employees, meaning they were exempt from the normal practice of receiving time-and-a-half for overtime and double-time for holidays. While widely used in the defense contractor industry, the FLSA was intended to limit compensation for certain categories of executive and administrative employees but has been routinely and unfairly applied to the defense contractor workforce, decreasing employee compensation, in this case by approximately eight percent of gross pay. In 2002, TRW was acquired by Northrup Grumman (NG), and the contract was assigned to the Mission Systems Division (MS). Initially contractors were given an eight percent match to their retirement contributions as NG phased out its defined benefits plan. That was later reduced to four percent as participation in the company retirement program was eliminated.

Under Mission Systems administration, the contractors experienced a further decrement to their salaries. The Mission Systems EWW policy required that in any two-week pay period when contractors worked excess hours, prior to receiving compensation for EWW, contractors had to work four hours on an uncompensated basis. Those hours were accounted for on timecards, and NG was paid in full for them by the government, but that money was withheld from the employees and reserved as additional corporate profit. If contractors were deployed over multiple pay periods, the 4-hour EWW burden had to be met for each successive pay

period. In 2011, NG underwent a reorganization, and the contract was moved to the Technical Services Division.

Technical Services Division continued the trend of compensation and benefits erosion. The four-hour EWW requirement was increased to ten hours, more than doubling uncompensated hours required of the contractor workforce and adding to Northrup's profit margin. In 2012, the Technical Services senior district manager announced that in a move to reduce contract costs and become more competitive for the upcoming contract re-compete, he was withholding all annual raises for employees across the board. During this period, annual raises generally ran about four percent, and contrary to his claim of reducing contract expenses, were included in the contract escalation clause which automatically increased the amount Northrup received from the government as each option year of the contract was executed. This money was also siphoned off to Northrup's corporate profit and had a cascading effect on future employee compensation.

In 2011, the decision was made by the Secretary of Defense to de-establish USJFCOM. SOCJFCOM would remain, at least temporarily as a fully funded entity under USSOCOM, with the contract still being held by NG Technical Services. At this point, the contract employed 38 full time equivalent contractor positions working in concert with their military and government equivalents. By 2013, USSOCOM determined it could maximize savings by consolidating the contract under the newly formed Force Management Directorate (FMD), moving all personnel to Tampa, Florida. Although NG initially promised to assist contractors opting to make the move to Tampa, it ultimately reneged on that agreement, leaving contractors to fund the move out-of-pocket, for which they were never reimbursed. As a result, only nine of the 38 employees on the contract at that time decided to relocate, creating a wide-ranging loss of talent and experience.

Once at USSOCOM, the contract was re-established as a part of FMD, which eventually swelled to over 150 employees and required the addition of two sub-contractors, RDR and VATC. The subcontractors had radically different business models from NG, which led to wide salary disparities among contractors, including some performing identical services and contributing to disillusionment among the workforce members. As the contract came up for re-compete, it was re-classified as an 8(a) set-aside for small, disadvantaged, veteran-owned businesses, disqualifying NG from competing as the prime contractor.

Figure 6

UEWTEP RFP

SOLICITATION, OFFER AND AWARD

1. CONTRACT NO. W56122-07-0001
 2. SOLICITATION NO. W56122-07-0001
 3. DATE ISSUED 20 Dec 2007
 4. CONTRACT VALUE \$1,000,000.00

5. CONTRACT TITLE: UEWTEP RFP

6. CONTRACT CLASSIFICATION: UNCLASSIFIED

7. CONTRACT TYPE: FIRM-FIX PRICE

8. CONTRACT CLASSIFICATION: UNCLASSIFIED

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The request for proposal was very detailed, coming in at 57 pages and containing the typical verbiage for an 8(a) set-aside which specifies:

(a) Offers are solicited only from small business concerns expressly certified by the Small Business Administration (SBA) for participation in the SBA's 8(a) Program and which meet the following criteria at the time of submission of offer:

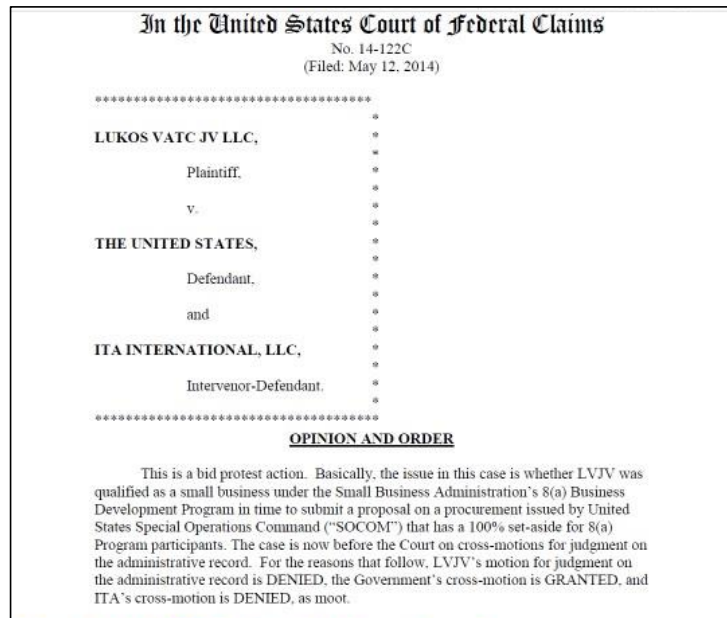
(1) The Offeror is in conformance with the 8(a) support limitation set forth in its approved business plan.

(2) The Offeror is in conformance with the Business Activity Targets set forth in its approved business plan or any remedial action directed by the SBA.

A number of consortiums were formed, including VATC, RDR, and Lukos, NG and ITA, as well as several smaller competitors including Intelligence, Communications and Engineering (ICE). The VATC, RDR, and Lukos consortium was initially awarded the contract, which was protested by the Northrup and ITA consortium.

Figure 7

UEWTEP Protest



Protests are, unfortunately, a common occurrence in the defense contracting profession, delaying contract awards, and leaving contractors in limbo as to their future employment. Unsuccessful protests formerly resulted in the company being eliminated from future bidding opportunities, but this process was discontinued, leaving no penalty for frivolous complaints, and greatly expanding the number of filed grievances. In this case, the protest was first handled through arbitration, but eventually was transferred to U.S. District court, in a process that lasted over a year. In the meantime, Northrup continued to execute the contract under a contingent extension. The final verdict resulted in VATC being disqualified for failing to meet requisite filing deadlines. In an unusual turn of events, the contract was not awarded to Northrup, which had brought the protest action, but instead went to ICE. Under Northrup's terms of employment, employees who had been with the company for at least three years were entitled to a severance package. Once Northrup was informed they would not be included in the next contract iteration, they hastily rewrote their compensation guidelines to exclude their Tampa employees from collecting severance pay.

Contractors were relieved the re-compete ordeal was over and looked to their new employer to rectify the current range of salary disparities. Unfortunately, someone within the contract management team leaked all salary data, normally considered proprietary information, to the incoming ICE human resources team. Although a few of the highest paid employees saw minimal salary decreases, most employees were offered salaries identical to those under Northrup. ICE continued to offer a similar benefits package and retained the EWW policy, minus the ten-hour uncompensated requirement. This iteration of the contract was let as a firm, fixed-price agreement, with a set number of full-time equivalent billets, and a fixed amount to be paid to the company for contract execution. Approximately a year into the contract, ICE faced budget

shortfalls due to failing to accurately account for EWW costs, and as a result underbidding the contract, gaining an unfair cost advantage over its competitors, but leaving it without sufficient funds to fully execute the contract. The resultant budget shortfall left ICE short monies to support EWW; for a period of time ICE required employees to charge all EWW hours against an uncompensated job code. Although this only lasted several months, employees were never compensated for overtime worked within this period. ICE sought and received an equitable adjustment to the contract from USSOCOM to make up the shortfall in funding. This had the effect of highlighting to ICE the requirements of operating under the FLSA, which caused the human relations department to realize they had never formally notified employees of their “exempt” status as required under the act. To correct that oversight, ICE recalculated what employees should have been paid in a non-exempt status and made a one-time payment to employees to cover the shortfall. ICE then issued letters to each contractor identifying them as exempt from overtime benefits and continued to pay straight time for excess hours. In 2015, President Obama issued an executive order mandating defense contracting companies provide up to seven days of paid medical leave to defense contractors. ICE opted to convert seven days of existing contractor paid time off to medical leave. Although contractors were not required to justify taking “medical leave” and no documentation was required, the net result was contractors being denied another benefit awarded them by government direction and negated by contracting company malfeasance.

After 5 years of executing the contract, ICE experienced what many 8(a) companies discover; by winning and executing this multi-million-dollar (approximately \$150 million) contract, they had now exceeded the criteria to qualify as an 8(a) and could not enter the next re-compete as a prime contractor. ICE chose to form a consortium with its former competitor,

Lukos, but was unsuccessful in its bid effort, with the contract being awarded to another 8(a), Wittenberg Weiner Consulting, LLC (WWC). Although the ICE-Lukos consortium protested the award, they were unsuccessful in overturning the Source Selection Evaluation Board's decision. As in the previous contract transition, proprietary salary information was leaked, and salary offers were identical to those the incumbents received under the previous contract administration. WWC offered similar benefits and compensation with one major exception. The FLSA, which most defense contracting companies utilize to shortchange their employees on overtime pay was primarily designed to apply to salaried workers. Up to this point in the UEWTEP contract, there had been no attempt to treat employee time keeping as anything other than the standard required for hourly employees. WWC decided to implement procedures where employees were not compensated for hours in excess of the 1080 prescribed annually under the contract, similar to salaried employees, but would instead accrue compensatory time off in lieu of overtime pay. While this ploy greatly reduced overall contract costs to the government, it once again came at the expense of the employees, who on average saw their salaries decrease in the range of three to five percent.

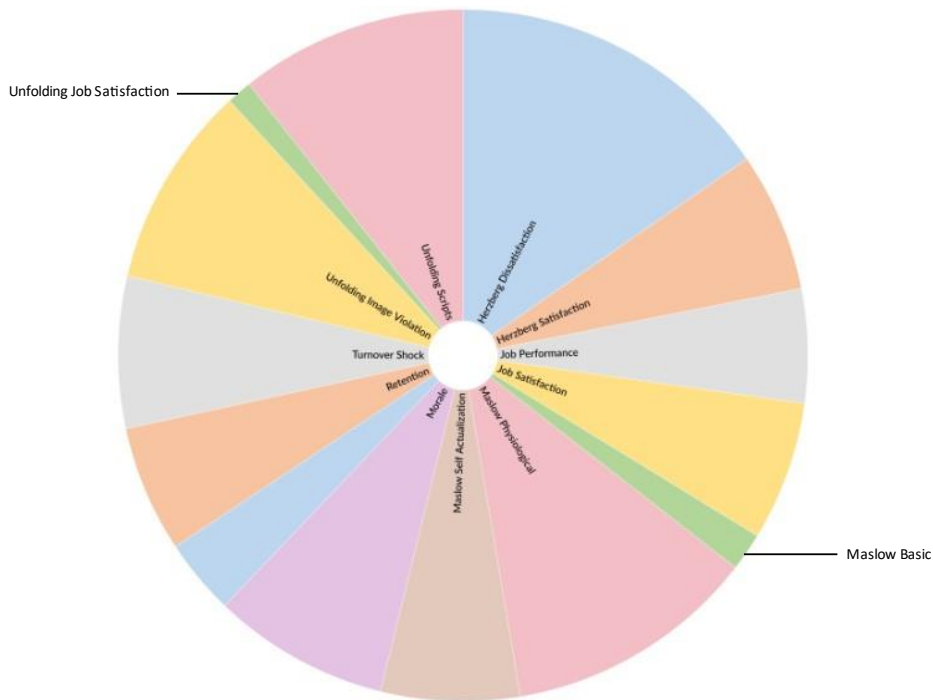
This abbreviated deep dive into just one of the myriads of extant DoD contracting vehicles reveals the numerous avenues companies avail themselves of to decrease employee compensation and benefits and to subsequently increase corporate profitability. The results are not insubstantial, and are also not inconsequential over time, as current salaries dictate annual raises and have a multiplier effect during the contract lifecycle. Defense contractors routinely see decrements to salaries and benefits, often at times other than the defense contract re-compete which are the focus of this study. This corporate misbehavior is often unchecked, leading to

greater profits for the contracting company created solely by transferring contractor salary and benefit funds into corporate coffers.

This study examined the experiences of 15 participants with varying perspectives of the defense contract re-compete process, including contractors, contract management personnel, and government contracting professionals. The study focused on how the re-compete process impacted employee motivational attributes such as job satisfaction, morale, productivity, and retention. The following chart shows how these participants proportionally weighted these topics based on the number of coding references and a variety of criteria including the aforementioned attributes and their relationships to the three primary concepts of Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, Herzberg’s Motivation Hygiene (Two-Factor) Theory, and Lee and Mitchell’s Unfolding Model of Turnover.

Figure 8

Proportional Coding References



Further analysis of the participant's interview transcripts broken down by coding through NVivo software revealed several distinct themes.

Themes Discovered

This study focused on aspects of defense contractor employment that were considered to be relevant to job satisfaction, morale, productivity, and retention. The previous section referenced some of the additional stresses inflicted on defense contractors by company policy decisions focused on corporate profitability, rather than supportive efforts to retain and promote employee satisfaction. The initial sections of this research project discussed the theories that might explain how and why contractors react to the pressures generated by contract re-competes, affecting their behaviors and decision-making processes during these tumultuous events.

The researcher attempted to view this through an impartial lens, realizing that previous experiences might cloud perspective and lead to pre-meditated conclusions. As a result of this introspection, the researcher made a concerted effort to allow the views of the participants shape the conclusions of this project. First and foremost, the researcher attempted to craft interview questions that were open-ended and allowed for free discussion of the pertinent topics. Ultimately these were found to still be somewhat restrictive; this was mitigated somewhat by utilizing follow-up questions where appropriate and allowing the participants free rein to express their perspectives while guiding the conversation within the bounds of the project's themes. The researcher also realized that significant reframing of the questions after the project was underway could have substantially raised the risk of confirmation bias. Analysis of the interview results conducted through the application of NVivo software was accomplished with a deliberate attempt to avoid inadvertent bias and to ensure interpretations considered all possible explanations based on the available evidence. The conclusions drawn from this study may be

used to positively mold future contract bid procedures with the aim of limiting the impact of re-competes on the contractor workforce, as well as identifying additional avenues for research that may be exploited by future research endeavors.

This qualitative research project examined the impact of recurring defense contract re-competes on the contractor workforce. Participants included ten contract employees, three contract management personnel, and two government contracting professionals. Selection of personnel with a variety of backgrounds and roles ensured a diversity of perspectives; most were military retirees, as is common in the defense contracting industry, but two had only civilian experiences prior to entering the defense contractor industry. Both male and female contractors were included in the participant roster, as were an assortment of ethnicities. Due to pandemic restrictions, interviews were conducted solely by telephone, limiting the researcher's physical observations to tone and manner of speaking. All interviews were transcribed and verified prior to analysis through NVivo software to assist in identifying the resultant multiple themes and interpretations.

Theme 1. Contractor Productivity and Job Satisfaction are not Widely Affected by the Re-Compete Process. In spite of the incremental erosion of compensation and benefits, as well as the inevitable turmoil created by a contract re-compete, contractors remain remarkably resilient to these detrimental conditions, mostly reporting high job satisfaction and denying any impact on productivity. These issues were explored by interview questions 2 and 2.a, which inquire into how contract re-competes affect job satisfaction and worker productivity. Participant 12 gives an excellent summary of how most contractors view the re-compete process as it affects productivity:

I take great pride in my performance and re-competing, that's just business. I mean, that's, I said, that's the five-year contract and I have no say-so on that taking place and how it works but I do have a lot of say-so about my work performance. And I think I'm going to remain a viable candidate to remain at work, along with this personal pride and the work that I do.

Participant 2 offered a similar view of the re-compete process and its impact on contractor productivity from a management perspective:

You know, I think I've been pretty lucky overall, sitting in the task lead seat that they- everybody that's always worked for me or with me has believed that we were going to do the absolute best that we possibly could for them. I don't recall any instance where, because there was a re-compete year, or versus a regular year, that there was any drop in productivity.

Additional participants simply replied in the negative as to whether their productivity had suffered, while Participant 11 had the unique perspective that the re-compete process itself might encourage contractors to maintain their standard of performance to demonstrate commitment and desire to remain on the contract once the bid was awarded. Participant 1 echoed this perspective when he suggested job performance was one of the criteria management staff utilized when determining personnel actions.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs suggests that employee motivation is governed by different categories of need, with the bottom tier focused on basic needs, followed by psychological needs, and capped off by self-actualization (Jyothi, 2016). Defense contractors do not fit neatly into Maslow's pyramid, as they continue to function towards the top of the hierarchy even when some of their basic needs are under threat during a contract re-compete, continuing to emphasize

productivity regardless of the status of their job security, and even when experiencing wage and benefit loss. Participant 1 felt a loss of morale when his salary was decreased, but it still didn't affect his productivity. Participant 7 specifically referenced the need to continue the mission as well as a sense of personal pride in spite of reduced morale. That may be due to several factors. As most defense contractors are retired military personnel, they have already acquired a well-developed work ethic, as well as the ability to complete complex, long-term taskings with limited oversight and supervision. Additionally, most have a sense of duty and dedication to the mission which seems to transcend some of their immediate personal needs. Frequently, established relationships with other contractor, military, and government personnel are also cited as a rationale for putting mission over self. Maslow's Hierarchy should portend decreased productivity during the contract re-compete period, but that doesn't seem to be the case for most defense contractors. Participant 6 expressed what the majority of the contractors evinced:

You know, I haven't noticed changes in morale. Probably, like I said during that second re-compete, because it was kind of a free for all. It was a big changeover with those contracts. And I think that's-that uncertainty was the biggest impact across the contracting team that I was with. Because there were a lot of people who didn't know where they were going to land or if they were going to land somewhere. So, it's more the uncertainty. I'm not sure if it's morale because people continue-I mean, we're still continuing to work and do a good job.

Contractors frequently cited familiarity with the mission, co-workers, and the location as criteria that promoted job satisfaction. Personnel that expressed enjoyment of their work situation were most likely to accept the risk of salary and benefit cuts that accompany a contract re-compete. Participant 5 explained it this way:

I wanted to continue to have, I enjoyed that-the work that I was doing. So I was, I guess in hindsight, willing to continue to accept some risk that-that, you know, we might lose it, and I might not be rehired by the winning outfit. But apparently my enjoyment of the job I had, that employment was-was enough to accept that risk.

Other participants suggested they based their job satisfaction based on maintaining the status quo, determining their best opportunity to retain current salary and benefit levels resided with their current employer, and based on the assumption the incumbent would successfully bid during the contract re-compete. Herzberg's Motivation Hygiene (Two-Factor) Theory discusses how motivation factors fall into two groups; one that improves motivation, and one that fails to motivate and thus most likely reverts to the status quo (Tan & Waheed, 2011). This is most common when a re-compete bid has been awarded, and the incumbent or a new company determines cuts in costs or personnel are required to maintain desired profit margins (negative hygiene factors), or the mission is significantly altered reducing billets and compelling reductions in force. Again, at least one of the contractors staked a position contradicting the theory and providing more evidence that defense contractors are motivated by different factors than standard civilian employees. Another factor mentioned by participants is the length of the contract, both when they began employment, and after a re-compete. Longer contracts were seen to increase job satisfaction, primarily because they postpone the stress of a re-compete to a later date, allowing for a period of financial stability and the opportunity to plan for the future based on current income and benefit levels, once again assuming no additional decrements to compensation levels are forthcoming. This additional reference to the status quo serving as a positive factor provides further evidence that Herzberg's Theory is not fully accurate in predicting what motivates or dissuades the contractor workforce.

Theme 2. Contractors can and do Plan Exit Strategies when Faced with a Contract Re-Compete. While contractors are somewhat resilient to contract re-compete impacts when it comes to productivity and job satisfaction, they do have limitations, and there is a breaking point at which they will seek greener pastures. Interview question 2.b addresses the impact of recurring contract re-competes on employee turnover. Lee and Mitchell's Unfolding Model of Turnover suggest that job satisfaction may be undermined by what is described as an "image violation" when their view of a position's requirement and accompanying rewards turn out to be incompatible with their employer's vision (Lee et al., 1999). Almost all of the study participants described some job dissatisfaction concerns related to re-competes that had an impact on how they approached retention issues. Several contractors reported situations that fit the image violation criteria, citing position downgrades, pay cuts, unkept promises for promotions and bonuses, resulting in a number of personnel seeking new positions. Employees may also seek alternate employment when they are threatened with layoffs, mergers which cause consolidation, or other organizational shocks (Holtom et al., 2017). Participant 5 mentioned a promise of compensation in the form of severance pay that was offered but never actually proffered when the company lost the contract, stating:

But in the cases where for some reason you weren't offered employment, that could be problematic when the company that's lost the contract decides that you're not worthy of any kind of follow-on compensation, you know, and you also don't get hired by the new one. So-but that's, you know, a reality, maybe you're no longer a defense contractor at all. An unfortunate reality, as I've observed.

Participant 6 observed the difference in employee loyalty to the company, and the lack of a corresponding loyalty from the company when a re-compete does not end up in their favor.

Participant 8 had his position eliminated during a re-compete after being with the same company for 10 years but was then offered an opportunity to rejoin the company at a lower salary, which he promptly declined. Several participants pursued other employment opportunities or even temporary retirement once salaries and benefits were decremented during a re-compete, but contrary to the Unfolding Model's premise, did not make any plans in advance. Participant 12 explained this dichotomy by explaining he felt that after 25 years as a successful defense contractor, if he were let go from his current contract, he could easily find another position. Others used the re-compete's downside as the impetus to leave a situation they were not comfortable in at the time. Participant 5 revealed that he always had an active resume and continually looked for better options, although he had never actually been adversely impacted by a re-compete such that it drove him to seek alternative employment. Participant 6 was in a situation where the incumbent company he worked for was not competitive during the re-compete, and realized he needed to seek different options before contract turnover but expressed guilt over his decision. In spite of the sometimes-negative results of contract re-competes, several participants remained in their positions even after pay and benefit cuts because they wanted to continue to work on the mission they were supporting. One participant reported a classic response in line with the Unfolding Model's premise. His contract was up for re-compete, and one of the companies favored to win was a former employer, who had lost the contract he was previously employed under and terminated him in an overseas billet without compensating him for his return to CONUS move. Out of concern his previous employer might win the re-compete, which was the case, he planned and executed a contingency move to another contract as soon as the re-compete winner was announced but before the contract was actually transferred. Most contractors found an image violation sufficient motivation to seek alternate

employment, although few planned ahead; most simply reacted to the new undesirable circumstances by voting with their feet.

Theme 3. Contractors View Compensation and Benefits as Primary Motivators in Making Retention Decisions. The topic of compensation as it affects retention is addressed by interview questions 2, 2.a, and 2.b, which sought to understand how re-competes affected retention. Compensation and benefits fall into the two lowest tiers of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, meeting physiological and safety needs. Maslow's theory suggests that threats to basic needs will prevent contractors from reaching or remaining in the higher tiers and committing to reaching organizational goals (Madan, 2017). Study results suggest this is not always the case, with contractors exhibiting sustained productivity, and most still asserting a high level of job satisfaction even when feeling wages and benefits are under threat during a contract re-compete. Most contractors that experienced retention issues did so in a reactive manner, with only one admitting to continuously seeking better opportunities, and with just a couple of contractors following the classic Unfolding Theory's path of establishing a departure script and executing it as the re-compete progressed. Yet, most contractors expressed concern over the possibility of compensation decreases, especially in the current fiscal environment of limited budgets which are increasingly impacted by the corrosive effects of inflation. There is well-placed concern that future re-compete cycles will move away from the "best value" proposition currently in use with more emphasis on cost considerations and potentially a return to the "lowest bid, technically acceptable" method of contract award. A government contracting professional expressed it this way:

Lowest bid technically acceptable for skilled labor force is not a good idea. That's just- that's my opinion. Best value is always the way to go. A lot of times again, my

experience I've seen some companies underbid or not underbid, but try to shave some fat or whatever, and it created retention issues.

Queries about the impact of contract re-competes inspired a wide variety of responses ranging from a sense of resignation to outrage, to a sense of betrayal. Most noted the tendency of companies to lowball bidding in an effort to be more competitive, resulting in reduced funding to pay employees and ultimately threatening wages and benefits, while expecting the same level of expertise and output from a disillusioned workforce. This is in addition to the normal churn and disruption experienced when a company other than the incumbent wins the bidding war.

Participant 12 expressed his sense of resignation this way:

We know this coming into the job every 5 years, there's going to be a re-compete. So, this-I hate to use this phrase like-big boy rules. But I mean, we're all grown men and we know this coming into the job. You know that it's a five-year contract. After 5 years, it's going to be a re-compete for another company to take over. So, there's no coddling, nor do I expect to be coddled.

Due to pandemic restrictions on unnecessary physical contact, these interviews were conducted solely by telecon, preventing the researcher from observing body language and facial expression. The researcher was, however, able to capture tone of voice and deduce some of the attitudes and emotions being expressed verbally. Most participants were somewhat measured and sure in tone of voice, while a few were more hesitant and sounded anxious. Almost all became more animated during discussions about the potential for a re-compete to affect compensation levels, with the exception of management and contracting professionals, who seemed to reflect a business-is-business approach to the re-compete process.

Not all contractors were as concerned with pay and benefit cuts or even personnel reductions. Participant 4 opined little concern as he felt his resources were adequate to compensate for a period of unemployment, while participant 5 viewed the process in a very passive manner, feeling he had no control or input and was resigned to whatever the outcome was, whether it benefitted him or not. That was not the case for most contractors, however. A number expressed dissatisfaction with the possibility of losing seniority and the accompanying job benefits such as paid time off in the event their company failed to maintain a position on the contract. Frequently, potential cuts in pay and benefits were cited for loss of morale and a desire to seek alternative employment opportunities. On a recent contract re-compete at USSOCOM, the winning company immediately announced a 20% cut in salaries across the board. Of the entire workforce on that contract, 14 out of 15 employees promptly quit, leaving that particular company temporarily unable to perform its mission, and requiring extensive efforts to find and train replacement employees. In keeping with some of the previously discussed comments, contractors lamented the loss of camaraderie, sense of mission, and personal relationships that might be affected when a re-compete caused a loss of employment or created conditions leading to retention issues. When participant 10 was queried on how re-competes affected retention, he summed it up thusly: “Yeah, it's mainly again salary level, salary and loss of positions, and possibly, you know, you're not being retained on the contract are the big three.”

Two contractors were less concerned with pay and benefits and more conscious of geographic location. Participant 3 expressed satisfaction with location based on the availability of positions within several co-located major military organizations and felt less pressure during the re-compete process because there were other options locally. Participant 6 clearly favored location over any other consideration or loyalty to a particular company or mission. Most

contractors, however, routinely expressed a desire to remain on their current contract with their incumbent company in order to continue receiving raises and benefits based on accrued seniority and noted the uncertainty accompanying a re-compete as motivating them to consider seeking employment elsewhere. For a contracting company, the decision to tender a lowball bid is often made as a last-ditch effort to remain on a contract, at which point they have determined corporate survival trumps the needs of their workforce, and are prepared to sacrifice employee retention, goodwill, expertise, and loyalty on the altar of profitability.

Theme 4. Recurring Re-Competes can have a Profound Effect on Contractor

Morale. Workforce morale is an issue of serious concern for leadership and management of military, civilian, and contractor personnel. Issues dealing with the stresses of undergoing a contract re-compete were addressed by interview questions 1.a, 4, 4.a, and 4.b. While morale issues seemed unimportant to worker productivity, they did have an impact on job satisfaction and, in some cases, retention decisions. When low morale decreases job satisfaction, workers experience negative (hygiene) factors as laid out in Herzberg's Motivation Hygiene Theory, which can result in labor complaints and absenteeism, and increase the potential to seek additional employment opportunities (Tan & Waheed, 2011). Maslow suggests threats to security in terms of basic employment benefits can affect morale negatively and cause them to seek security elsewhere (Madan, 2017). Contractors reported a plethora of concerns leading to decreased morale, in addition to the frequently mentioned assaults on pay and benefits.

Rumors often fly rampantly during the re-compete process, although they are often based on previous experiences or have at least a passing relationship with the truth. One often mentioned fear is the possibility of a contract, or at least a portion of it, be geographically relocated, as had happened to the initial SOCJFCOM contract referenced previously. Another is

the very real concern of a company or mission reorganization, frequently driven by customer requirements or simply by ascendancy of a new prime contractor. Whatever the reason, re-competes impact morale, usually not in a positive manner. Participant 1 described it simply by stating: “Morale always decreases before and during a re-compete and at best stays level.”

Participant 11 linked anxiety and decreased morale during a re-compete to how a contractor perceives individual performance as an indicator of retention probability. Company messaging matters as well, as a company that believes it has a high probability of retaining a contract during a re-compete tends to convey that either tacitly or overtly to its employees, creating an environment where morale is maintained or even increased. While reduced anxiety creates favorable conditions for increasing employee morale, it can be even more devastating if the company then loses the re-compete, completely destroying employee morale and trust in the process. Participant 14 succinctly captured that sentiment: “Well, it does affect me personally because it does affect morale and confidence in being able to pursue what we were comfortable with in the past, with the past company.”

Several contractors mentioned factors outside of the usual concerns. One was that re-competes seemed to always fall around the holiday season, adding stress to an already hectic period. Another mentioned that for employees coming on late in the contract cycle, their employment documentation, including access badging, had a fairly short suspense, indicating the potential for employment to end suddenly. Contractors also cited minimal information and lack of transparency during the re-compete process, which will be addressed in more detail shortly, as another aspect of the process that produced diminished morale. Overall, the contractor workforce found re-competes to be stressful, anxiety-ridden events, with mostly negative impacts on morale and well-being. Management reported observing behavioral changes they linked to the stresses

of the re-compete. While those managers interviewed for this study did not comment on their own morale issues, they are under even higher levels of stress, as they not only have to deal with anxious employees, but most also cope with the knowledge that if their company fails to win the re-compete, they are the ones most likely to be replaced with the winning company's management team. Only the contracting professionals seemed to be immune from this phenomenon, as their positions are seldom in jeopardy regardless of which company eventually prevails.

Theme 5. While some Contractors Reported Having Limited Visibility into the Re-Compete Process, Most Think There Must be a Better Way.

Many contractors expressed opinions on the actual re-compete process, although there was wide variability on the level of perceived and factual information received from both their companies and government contract representatives. Their impressions were elicited by interview question 1.b which specifically addressed the topic of information flow, but they also touched on that subject repeatedly when responding to other research questions. While not addressed directly by the concepts utilized to explain employee behavior, the issues created by re-competes can be magnified by lack of transparency and lead to the adverse conditions predicted by these theories, resulting in low morale, decreased job satisfaction, and retention issues. Almost all contractors had a negative view of information flow during the re-compete process, and many expressed a belief the process could be improved, in turn alleviating some of the issues seen as detrimental to contractor behavior.

While this topic was addressed directly by one of the research questions, responses pertaining to this subject were scattered throughout the results of the coding scheme utilized by

the researcher, highlighting areas of overlap throughout the research project. Participant 10 provided an excellent summary of the issue:

But I think part of the problem is that the contractors just don't have confidence when they're not being, you know, talked to directly and kept informed. So, I think the only thing DoD can do policy wise and law wise and regulation wise is to do nothing but encourage the contracting companies to, when they're coming up for a re-compete, to discuss as much as they possibly can with the employees. But it's kind of a slippery slope because you don't want a lot of proprietary information thrown out there, you know, because it's a highly competitive world.

He raises a several important points with his comment. First is that employees lose confidence and subsequently experience decreased morale when they feel the process wants transparency and they are lacking the data required to make informed decisions. Secondly, the government is limited in what information it can provide, other than what is publicly available under existing regulatory constraints. Finally, companies are loath to provide information that might be compromised and used by a competitor to gain an unfair advantage. This leads to a perceived information blackout leaving the contractors unable to properly plan for the re-compete's potential outcomes. Participant 14 also noted a dearth of information on potential re-scoping of the contract requirements, although some of this information is available through the requests for proposals, which are a matter of public record. Participant 2 noted a situation where management deliberately kept contractors in the dark as a tool for renegotiating salaries by playing on fears of billet downsizing or reorganization. Participant 5 referenced himself as a "victim" in the process and that his only course was to "endure" or seek another job. Whether deliberate or not, this lack of information during the re-compete process has a deleterious effect on contractor morale and

behavior. Contractors believe they would be better served by a more transparent re-compete process providing them with the tools they need to make career decisions while protecting proprietary information during the bid process. Unfortunately, the level of information provided to contractors during re-competes is not mandated by regulation, and contracting companies have a vested interest in limiting information, often to the detriment of the very employees they wish to retain.

Interpretation of the Themes

Coding for thematic research seems to be somewhat arbitrary and subjective initially, based on impressions of a vast volume of research data and tied to the concepts and research questions developed in the early stages of the research project. A retroactive view of the comparison of coding, themes, and research questions reveals a paradox of sorts; without the coding developed by referencing the research questions, the themes could not have emerged, yet once the themes were identified, it becomes evident the coding could have been more accurately targeted. Regardless of this conundrum, the coding scheme developed by the researcher was effective in allowing themes to emerge that answer the pre-supposed research questions.

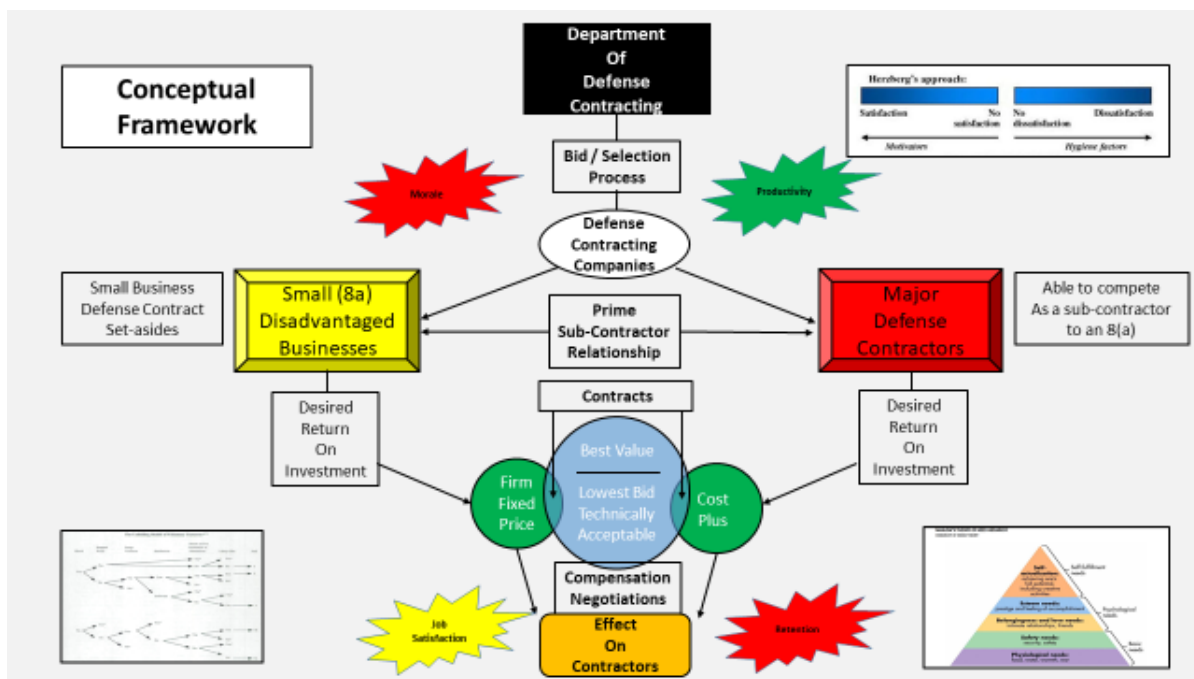
The emergent themes depict a contractor workforce torn between conflicting loyalties to mission, company, and self-interest. Contractors expressed a desire to continue to support the mission, maintain current relationships, and satisfy multiple levels of Maslow's Hierarchy. Some cited a feeling of loyalty to their current company, while others viewed their employer as unimportant in the overall scheme of employment, focused more on maintaining gainful employment without regard to which company was providing it. Productivity was almost uniformly considered to be a non-issue, while job satisfaction was less assured and morale routinely suffered, frequently creating the impetus for retention issues in keeping with Lee and

Mitchell’s Unfolding Model of Turnover. Ultimately, self-interest ruled the day, with most contractors citing pay and benefits as the primary driver behind career decisions, in keeping with Herzberg’s Motivation Hygiene Theory and its precept that negative hygiene factors influence employees in how they perceive their employers, the value of their contributions, and how an imbalance between the two can create irreconcilable conflict leading to an employee’s departure.

Representation and Visualization of the Data

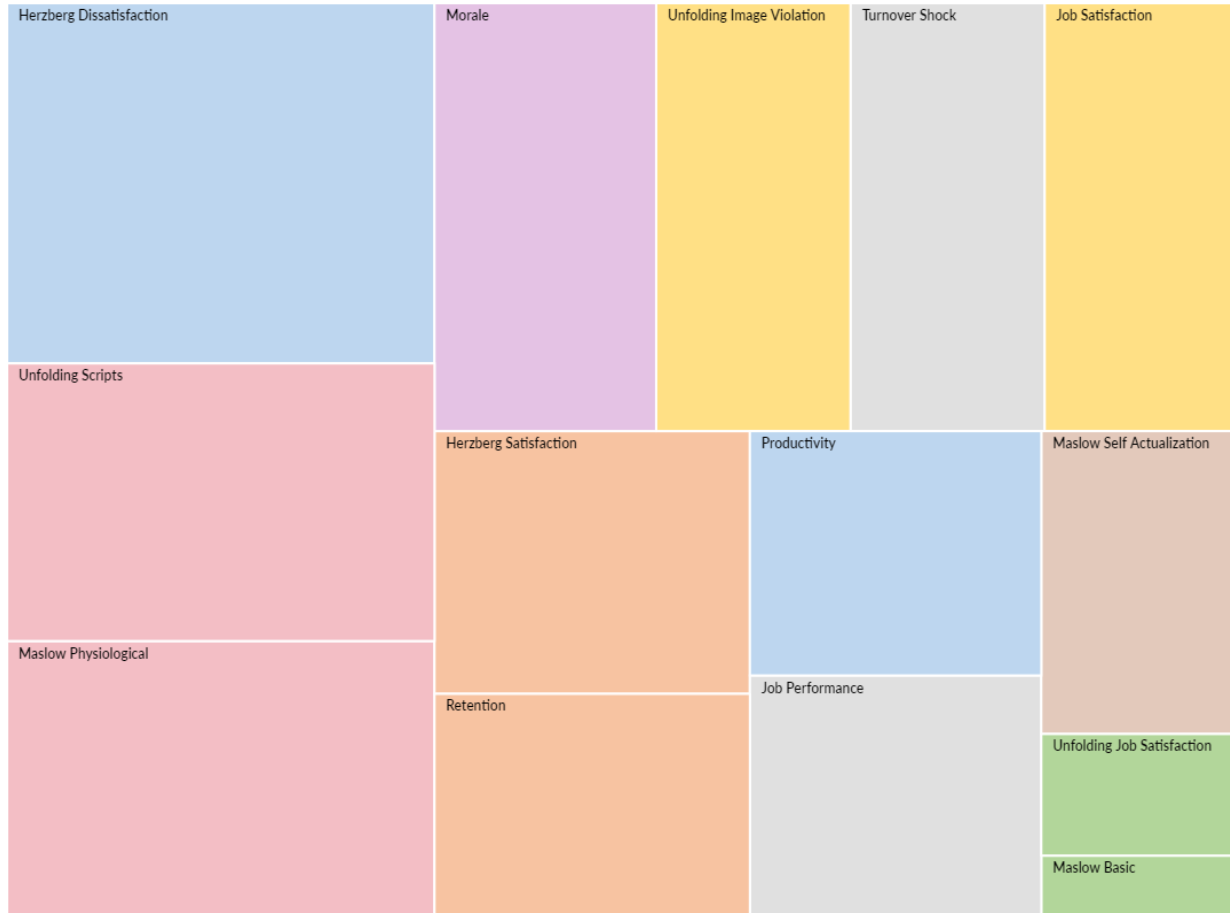
Figure 9

Conceptual Framework



The initial conceptual framework proved to be a valuable and accurate tool, representing the relationships between the defense contractors, government entities, contracting companies, and the various legal and regulatory frameworks utilized during the re-compete process, and incorporating the concepts applied to predict employee reactions and behaviors.

Figure 10

Coding Hierarchy Chart

The coding hierarchy chart reveals the proportional distribution of participant responses to the research questions. Although potentially skewed somewhat by the researcher's coding scheme, this chart roughly represents the areas of concern most discussed by the study participants. Based on rank order, participants were most likely to comment on Herzberg Dissatisfaction (hygiene) topics, correlating to pay and benefit issues, followed by Maslow's Physiological topics and Lee and Mitchell's Unfolding Model of Turnover script concerns, also related to pay and benefits and resultant retention issues. In all, the researcher catalogued 169 coded entries from the 15 participants.

Relationship of the Findings

The findings from this research project indicate the research questions were sufficiently crafted to elicit the necessary responses from the interview participants. The research questions were premised on addressing concerns about contractor morale, job satisfaction, productivity, and retention issues. The findings, as revealed by themes discovered during analysis, fully exposed areas where contractors were negatively impacted by contract re-competes, as well as somewhat surprising results in the areas of job satisfaction and productivity. Morale was impacted, sometimes severely during the re-compete process, leading in some cases to corresponding retention issues. Job satisfaction was impacted less so, although morale issues were to some extent correlated to lower job satisfaction. Productivity, from contractors' perspectives was not impacted by contract re-competes, contrary to the expectations generated by the concepts utilized as tools for predictive analysis.

The conceptual framework accurately depicted the relationships between contract personnel, management, government contracting bodies, and how the regulatory requirements of the re-compete process might impact the contractor workforce. The themes as developed during data analysis bore out these relationships, showing high correlation in most instances between the stresses generated during a contract re-compete and corresponding contractor actions and reactions, up to and including termination of employment.

Based on the proposed research questions, theories and concepts, and conceptual framework, the themes that emerged were generally in line with those anticipated during design of the project. For the most part, concerns with morale, retention, and to some extent job satisfaction, were born out by the emerging themes as a result of participant data analysis. The only outlier was in the anticipation of decreased productivity, demonstrating that defense

contractors are, in some ways, more dedicated to mission accomplishment than their civilian counterparts. The concepts chosen to support this research effort were generally adequate to support developing the research questions and anticipated themes but failed to fully predict contractor outcomes as a result of contract re-competes. Maslow's and Herzberg's theories accurately indicated changes in morale and job satisfaction but missed the mark when it came to predicting changes in productivity. Lee and Mitchell's theory was only fully realized in two of the participants' behavior patterns.

The literature as discussed in the research proposal supported most of the findings and emergent themes. The types of pressures encountered by defense contractors during re-competes frequently result in decreased morale and retention, and to a lesser extent, job satisfaction. This was verified by participant interview results and subsequent analysis. Lack of information, possible decreases in salaries and benefits, and potential loss of employment, as discussed in the literature review, were observed to have detrimental effects on the contractor workforce during contract re-competes. The only observed phenomenon during the study not accounted for by the extant literature was the steadfastness of employees when it came to productivity, with no exceptions noted.

The problem, as initially stated, remained valid throughout the study. The turmoil generated by recurring contract re-competes remains a real and verifiable detriment to the motivation of the contractor workforce. Pay and benefits, seniority, stability, and retention continue to be key drivers in defense contractor behavior patterns before, during, and after a re-compete. Once any of these issues are put into jeopardy due to the re-compete process, worker dissatisfaction arises and retention issues may become a paramount concern, for both management and employee, possibly leading to an exodus of talent and experience, which is

detrimental to both the company and the customer. This can be exacerbated by a lack of transparency for a variety of reasons, all of which adds up to unhappy employees who may shortly depart, leaving their positions vacant and the mission unfulfilled.

Summary of the Findings

This study was designed to examine the potential negative impacts on the defense contractor workforce during the periods immediately preceding and following recurring contract re-competes. Factors affecting employee motivation, including morale, job satisfaction, productivity, and retention issues were assessed through interviews and analysis, and the results were compared to the concepts generated during the research proposal and through specific research questions based on the problem statement. For the most part, the findings validated those concepts, revealing that the stresses placed on contractors during the re-compete process created diminished morale, somewhat affected job satisfaction, and frequently led to employee turnover. The one exception was in the area of productivity, where contractors uniformly denied any impact whatsoever, and indicating differing motivational biases when compared to civilian employees and based on the predictive analysis performed while developing the research proposal. While contractors cited inadequate information as one factor generating negative emotions during the re-compete process, they do believe the system could be modified by regulatory intervention to allow for a more transparent method, limiting the impact on contractor morale and job satisfaction, ultimately decreasing retention issues. Although the problems with the defense contract re-compete procedures are much more complex than can be addressed in a single study, there are areas which can be affected by relatively modest changes, including increased transparency and a decreased emphasis on cost as a determining factor in contract award.

Application to Professional Practice

This study revealed a number of findings that can be applied to defense contractors specifically, and to business practices in general. For the most part, a happy and content workforce goes a long way towards successful execution of a business model, whether in the defense industry or in any other venture offering products or services for sale to the general public. Failing to meet employees' basic needs for job security, stability, and income and benefit requirements can lead to a variety of negative consequences, including decreased morale, productivity, job satisfaction, and ultimately retention. Any of these issues can limit an organization's ability to execute its mission, leading to reduced production, lower quality goods and services, and eventually dissatisfied customers and shareholders.

Improving General Business Practices

Regardless of the desired goal of any business entity, in order to continue to exist, it must, under most circumstances, remain profitable. Profitability is the end state of a number of variables, including providing goods or services that are needed or desired at a price point exceeding the overall cost to produce them. A major cost, and often one of the primary inputs to production of goods or services, is the workforce; without a competent and satisfied labor pool, a company will fail even if all other production aspects are favorable. The net result of this study is to ascertain areas driving employee dissatisfaction and potentially enabling both contract companies and government procurement efforts to identify and alleviate these issues. Companies must foremost understand and satisfy customer desires; without providing exceptional value to the customer, a defense contracting company will soon find its contract terminated prematurely or face rejection during the next contract re-compete. Sinek (2019) referred to this precept in terms of the infinite game, where businesses must compete endlessly in an arena where the

players frequently change due to loss of will or financial resources, and where the rules fluctuate, and change based on the economic environment. Sinek (2019) described three pillars which businesses must adhere to, including to advance a purpose, protect people, and generate profit. Failing at any of the three will eventually cause a business to exit the infinite game. Advancing a purpose serves not only the business, but the well-being of employees as well. This is the existential sense of mission which is vital for a company to stay focused on why it exists in the first place. Generating a profit is required to stay in the game, as a loss of financial means also requires the business to withdraw from the game. Finally, failing to protect the people that work for the company, the employees, is a sure-fire method of leaving the game prematurely.

Of the three pillars, this study focused on that of protecting the people, specifically employee retention and performance, tied to morale and job satisfaction concerns. In certain business models, aspects of production such as raw materials cost, facilities construction and maintenance, and logistics weigh heavily on profit margins and can often be the decisive factor between success and failure. In a service dominated field such as the one where most defense contracting companies operate, having the right mix of personnel with the appropriate experience levels and skillsets is undoubtedly the most important attribute, followed closely by the ability to retain these employees along with their corporate knowledge and sustained relationships with the customer. This study identified areas where companies often falter and sometimes fail in terms of prioritizing the needs of their employees over excessive profit margins and fulfilling the letter rather than the intent of the contract. Analysis of data collected during the study revealed findings that can be generalized to most of industry, along with some results peculiar solely to the defense contracting industry. Surprisingly, in a finding which contradicted concept predictions, defense contractors did not report any decreases in productivity during contract re-

competes, most likely due to a shared sense of mission rooted in their military heritage and work ethic. On the other hand, defense contractor personnel were somewhat susceptible to decreases in job satisfaction, and highly vulnerable to effects on morale, leading potentially to retention issues based on the same factors which impact employees across the economic spectrum, namely decreases to wages and benefits and threats to job security. Contract management personnel could help alleviate these issues by increased transparency, concentrating on the employees and the company's mission, rather than a single-sighted focus on corporate profitability at the expense of a motivated and satisfied workforce.

Potential Application Strategies

To solve a problem, often the most difficult step is initially determining that one exists and clearly defining the boundaries of the issue and delineating a range of proposed solutions. Not all problems can be neatly summarized, and not all solutions have broad enough application to fully cure identified defects. That does not, however, eliminate the moral and ethical responsibilities of management to find and implement the best solutions to ensure the company's mission is fulfilled, profitability is retained, and employees are treated as fairly as possible under the given economic circumstance and contractual obligations.

Potentially, the most critical aspect of this process is for the company to realize that a problem with morale, job satisfaction, productivity, and retention may exist, and seek to understand the scope and scale of the problem. Information is key, and must be derived from the workforce itself, through a variety of both formal and informal feedback mechanisms. These may be as simple as a series of employee surveys, the holding of town hall type meetings, or even the ubiquitous anonymous drop box for suggestions or comments. Whatever the method, feedback must be taken seriously and incorporated into the company's business model on an

ongoing basis. While polling worker satisfaction is especially critical in the period just prior and subsequent to a recurring contract re-compete, clear and transparent communication between management and workforce is desirable and profitable throughout the period of performance.

The problem does not lie solely with contract management, as numerous facets of the re-compete process are outside of their purview. Many aspects of the contracting process are mandated by government regulation, although contracting officers have some latitude in the types and volume of information disseminated during the re-compete process. Legal considerations require obscuration of certain types of information, both from the government and contractor perspectives. The government publishes relevant bidding criteria in its requests for proposals, describing what types of information are desired, what format it is required in, and the maximum lengths of company bid proposals. Companies are then free to design their proposals in a manner they feel highlight their strengths and minimize their weaknesses, as well as a determination of costs, including operating and travel expenses, employee salaries and benefits, and corporate profit margins. This information is highly proprietary and is only shared with the government and any partners to the bid itself. Contract re-competes are a very formal, highly regulated process, intended to level the playing field for competitors, while providing the government with sufficient information to choose a company whose proposal provides the best value and the highest probability for execution success. However, there are steps the government can take to minimize some of the uncertainty experienced by the contractor work force. Clear and transparent communication as allowed by law throughout the process can help to alleviate some of the concerns affecting morale and job satisfaction. Limiting the use of lowest bid, technically acceptable proposals as a major factor in source selection would decrease the probability of salary and benefit cuts, assuming the other major aspects of the contract remain

unchanged. Eliminating the 8(a) small business requirement for subsequent iterations of a contract, which currently has the effect of eliminating incumbents who no longer qualify under those criteria, would also increase stability by furthering the possibility contractors could continue to work for the incumbent company, rather than the current practice, which at best puts the former 8(a) in the position of a subcontractor, assuming they are part of a successful consortium with a new 8(a) front company. A final consideration for aspects under government control deals with contract length and the requirement to re-compete, on average, every 5 years. The government has the legal authority, at any time during contract execution, to shorten the re-compete process cycle time in the event the mission has radically changed, or the contract company is found to be failing to successfully execute under the negotiated terms. By the same token, the government can extend the contract for up to 6 months, or in the event of an award contestation, for as long as that takes to play out through arbitration or through the court system. One step the government could consider is offering additional incremental option years, which, with sufficient notification to the incumbent company and workforce, would have the effect of continuing to stabilize the workforce, as long as the contractor is fully successful in contract execution.

A final discussion point deals with what are known as contract escalation clauses. These are set amounts of increases in the compensation received by the company for each succeeding option year. They are basically designed to offset the effects of inflation, although the company is not required to disburse all or part of these increases to its employees. The base rate of inflation for the last decade has been around two percent, and most contract escalation clauses are in line with that projection. Current inflation rates, however, greatly exceed that amount, and over time, will result in a compounding impact on employee salaries and benefits, causing some

to seek employment on more recent contract vehicles which have a higher escalation or starting salary rate, and diminishing the attraction of contracts in their later option year execution periods. Companies do have the ability to request an equitable adjustment to contract reimbursement, but that is mostly limited to situations where raw material costs have escalated and are completely out of the control of the contract company. The government should consider providing an option where escalation clauses are tied to the cost-of-living index, with companies realizing that is a knife that cuts both ways; the amount of the escalation could decrease in a period of lower inflation, but the company, and especially the employees would be protected if they were to encounter as situation similar to current economic conditions.

Summary of Application to Professional Practice

This study examined the impact of government-mandated recurring contract re-competes on the defense contractor workforce. Several concepts and theories were examined and incorporated into the research effort, and although not fully predictive of employee behaviors, eventually provided the basis for developing the research questions. Participants included defense contractor personnel, corporate management, and government contracting professionals, resulting in a comprehensive data base of perceptions ensuring data saturation. Analysis of the interview results revealed deficits in employee morale and job satisfaction, increasing retention issues; surprisingly employee productivity was not affected. Study results revealed a number of areas where changes in both corporate management and government procurement activities, where allowed by law, could have a positive impact on employee behaviors, leading to higher retention and a better motivated workforce, benefitting both the purveyor of services and the customer. A holistic view of the analysis suggests that over-emphasis on cost-cutting measures by the government and profitability by contracting companies is detrimental to the workforce

writ large and leads to undesired outcomes both in terms of employee attitudes and behaviors as well as overall contract execution. Viewing these outcomes through a critical lens reveals several strategies that might be undertaken through management initiatives on both sides of the contracting transaction, which could increase job satisfaction and morale, resulting in positive retention rates, a more stable and contented workforce, and ultimately contract execution meeting both the service level desired by the customer, and the profitability required by the contracting company.

Recommendations for Further Study

The major anomaly revealed by this study of defense contractors was in the realm of productivity. Not a single contractor reported decreases in productivity regardless of morale and job satisfaction levels, even while several were contemplating and eventually executing exit strategies. The concepts examined early on in the research portion of the study suggested this should not be the case, as concerns with basic considerations such as pay, benefits, and job security frequently are manifested through decreased employee output as they see their visions diverge from those of management. The difference here may be the common sense of duty shared by an employee base made up primarily of military retirees or former military members which tend to be older, more mature, experienced, and educated. All of these aspects provide avenues for further exploration.

Comparisons can be made between defense contracting personnel and similar civilian-only service provider corporations to determine differences in attitudes and perceptions during times of turmoil. Civilian companies also often undergo periods of significant stress and upheaval during re-organizations and instances of downsizing, simulating the same type of circumstances experienced by defense contractor personnel during contract re-competes.

Surveying civilian counterparts to understand their responses and perceptions would allow comparisons to those of defense contractors, potentially revealing whether concepts such as Maslow's Hierarchy are still valid in today's workforce and serve as useful predictors of employee behavior. Additional surveys could show if work ethics between defense contractors and civilians based on age and life experiences greatly differ, and if so, how the defense contractor workforce might respond to contract re-competes in the future as the next generation of employees ages in. Finally, an assessment based on educational attainment could serve as a predictor to employee behavior and perceptions, allowing for finer discernment during the hiring process and limiting retention issues during the re-compete process. All of these potential studies have the possibility to reveal additional details about employee perceptions and reactions to stresses in the workplace, providing additional management tools for both contractor and government leadership, and illuminating the ongoing concerns generated by recurring contract re-competes.

Reflections

One rarely knows where life's journey will take them. This journey began as a casual discussion with a Liberty University graduate over future goals and challenges and is now nearing completion with a terminal degree and an advanced understanding of business theories and practices along with an in-depth grasp of research principles and writing techniques. This journey has required growth and introspection as well as assistance from a variety of professors and mentors to understand and develop the skills needed prepare, conduct, analyze, and publish this research project.

Personal & Professional Growth

The enormity of the task at hand is difficult to grasp at first. The researcher encountered several “all but dissertation” students along his journey, suggesting failure to complete the path was a real possibility. Fortunately, the Liberty University DBA program provided a solid foundation and a roadmap to success through coursework, mentoring, and dedicated leadership throughout the process. One of the more useful exercises was a class project on “doctoral persistence” which clearly evinced the stumbling blocks that lay ahead, while also providing guidance and encouragement on how to navigate the perils of ennui, tedium, and time management. Additional coursework provided the basic knowledge on conducting qualitative research and engaging in critical thinking, developing stronger personal study and work habits, building relationships with faculty and staff, and eventually connecting with research participants at a level sufficient to develop insights and reveal themes and messages critical to understanding and evaluating the findings of the research project. The project itself was a multi-faceted venture which included design, research, theory and concepts, development of research questions, building an understanding of the limitations of working with human subjects and IRB approval processes, and finally collecting and analyzing data through the NVivo software platform, all skillsets which the researcher lacked or were not fully developed before this undertaking.

The researcher also established highly honed research skills and learned how to use the tools and databases provided through the Jerry Falwell Library, as well as utilizing the Mendeley database to collate data and develop citations and reference listings in accordance with the APA’s Publication Manual. The ability to research, compile, draft, and edit a manuscript of this length and complexity demonstrates the level of professional and personal growth required to complete the dissertation process, while providing the basis for additional endeavors relying on

the skills and attributes established and polished over the course of instruction and writing. As previously mentioned, one of the issues frequently encountered by doctoral students is that of perseverance or persistence. This is complicated by the need for strict time management, as the dissertation process is time intensive, yet, students must also manage daily life requirements, working a full-time job while still being a spouse, parent, and maintaining both personal and professional relationships. All of these demands must be met, while still adhering to a reasonable timetable for dissertation completion. This required substantial personal growth and professional commitment to juggle multiple demands on available time, often forsaking leisure activities and postponing routine events to focus on completing this project in a timely manner. The net result, however, is someone who is more capable, focused, and goal oriented for having undertaken and completed this long, arduous, and challenging journey, combining both personal and professional goals and growth while building a continuing foundation for life-long learning and achievement.

Biblical Perspective

This study examined the impact of recurring contract re-competes on the defense contractor workforce. Of all the business functions discussed throughout this project, most can be summarized under the biblical worldview concept of stewardship. God called us to be stewards of His creation while still in the Garden of Eden. “And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the Garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it” (Gen 2:15, KJV). God intended for us to be stewards of all his creations, including each other, and by extension, for those in positions of leadership, to be stewards of those who serve underneath.

The wellbeing of employees is only one facet of that charge, with those aspects of a business relationship between leaders and followers as a prime opportunity to practice stewardship through a Christian Worldview business model. We are told in 1 Peter, 4:10 (KJV)

“As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” This further emphasizes God’s desire that we extend grace and charity to each other in the practice of stewardship and in the daily management of business relationships; these business arrangements exist as part of God’s plan, aligning His creations with our participation as managers on His behalf. The act of stewardship acknowledges our obedience to God and His sovereignty, and that the control we exercise is on his behalf; we are responsible as managers on both the public and private side of the contractual agreement to ensure employees are treated fairly and that profit does not become the ultimate motivator in business choices and personnel decisions. This choice is clearly summarized in Mat 6:24 (KJV) “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.”

As leaders and managers, we choose the well-being of our employees over profit margins and commercial success. If we make that choice in accordance with God’s direction and guidance, we are managing from a Biblical Worldview, administering what God has given us by utilizing his gifts for the benefits of others; we are serving God by serving others. While profit cannot be our only purpose in executing contractual agreements, it is necessary to remain in business and to continue our management activities for the benefit of employees. By placing our focus on employees first, and ensuring they experience an environment supportive of morale, job satisfaction, and retention, we encourage them to maximize productivity, making the most of the resources God has provided us to manage through good stewardship. Often this approach is sufficient in itself to ensure successful contract execution, as management through stewardship based on a Biblical Worldview produces the very outcomes desired by the customer; superior performance by a motivated and happy workforce, high levels of retention maintaining the

workforce experience level, and maximization of the cost benefit ratio. God has only delegated resources and authority temporarily; we as stewards must use them wisely, as we will one day be held to account. Our motivation must also be without question, based on Biblical perspectives, and not solely on secular concerns. The guidance in Col 3:23 (KJV) applies here: “And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men.” When we conduct our business affairs for the Glory of God, while including the benefit of mankind, we exercise stewardship as desired and designed by God’s direction, and while obeying the letter of his commands, our faithful execution of his desires will be reflected in the success of our business ventures with the accomplishments of the customer and employees becoming the desired end state of our efforts.

Summary of Reflections

As this long journey comes to its conclusion, it is appropriate to reflect on lessons learned, competencies acquired, and increased understanding of God’s purpose both on a personal and professional level. Undertaking such an arduous endeavor is not to be considered lightly; it comes at a high cost in terms of effort and resources in terms of time, money, and lost opportunity. On the other hand, the rewards are great as well. Upon completion of this course of study, one finds great appreciation in the efforts of others to ensure attainment of such a lofty goal, with the accompanying sense of gratitude for personal and professional growth opportunities as well as a better understanding of God’s plan and how our actions play a small part in integrating a Christian Worldview into business relationships, benefitting not only a successful contractual endeavor, but applying the principles of stewardship to ensure mission accomplishment, while also providing for the well-being and support of the defense contractor workforce.

Summary of Section 3

Section 3 offered an overview of the study, followed by a presentation of the findings. A description of the participants was provided, followed by a discussion of the data, how it was collected, analyzed, and summarized. A deep dive was conducted into the history of one DoD contract over a period of 20 years to reveal other pressures faced by the contractor workforce as companies attempt to maximize profits over employee concerns. Themes discovered were then revealed and discussed, answering the research questions, and demonstrating contractor perceptions on the topics of morale, job satisfaction, productivity, and retention. While morale was found to be seriously impacted, job satisfaction was less so, and productivity not at all. Retention did suffer, with several employees voluntarily seeking new employment opportunities to the detriment of the contracting company and the customer. Review of the concepts previously identified found them to be useful but not absolute in predicting employee behaviors, although the conceptual framework remained valid. A number of areas were identified where proactive endeavors by both company management and government contracting professionals could have a positive impact on the contractor workforce. The researcher also developed several recommendations for further study, primarily focused on comparisons with similar service-based companies in the civilian sector. The section concluded with some reflections on personal and professional growth, as well as a discussion on how the Biblical concept of stewardship might serve to alleviate many of the issues faced by management professionals today, providing guidance to better manage the workforce from a Christian Worldview, benefitting employees, companies, and customers alike while carrying out God's plan.

Summary and Study Conclusions

The overriding purpose of this study was to examine the impact of recurring contract re-competes on the contractor workforce. Theories and concepts introduced early in the research portion of this endeavor suggested the stresses associated with re-competes could have negative impacts on employees, contributing to decreases in morale, job satisfaction, productivity, and retention, all aspects, that when combined, result in less-than-optimal performance, putting the contractor company at risk and failing to produce the results desired by the customer. Concepts such as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Herzberg's Motivation Hygiene Theory, and Lee and Mitchell's Unfolding Model of Turnover suggested a number of research questions as well as positing the types of results that might result from a detailed inquiry into these topics. While not completely accurate in their predictions, these concepts allowed formulation of questions eliciting the responses needed to more fully understand the perceptions, motivations, and actions of the contractor workforce.

This qualitative case study was conducted in three parts. Section 1 discussed the nature of the problem, describing the constitution and general attributes of the defense contractor workforce. This was followed by a discussion of the government contracting process, its 5-year-long recurring re-compete cycle, and how companies approach the bidding process in response to government requests for proposals. It also examined the nuances of requirements levied by the Small Business Administration to encourage the inclusion of small, disadvantaged, veteran and women owned businesses and the impact those requirements have on the contract award process. Finally, these issues were utilized to formulate the problem and purpose statements, adding to the existing body of knowledge on the impacts of recurring contract re-competes on the contractor workforce. From these efforts, research questions were crafted, and a conceptual design was

crafted to visually depict the relationships between the major study participants, the government and private entities involved in the contracting process, and the theories chosen to explain and predict contractor behavior.

Constructivism was chosen as the research paradigm, and a flexible design was determined to be the optimal method of executing this qualitative case study. Three concepts were identified to assist in explaining employee motivation, or in the alternative, what conditions produce negative behavior traits. Maslow's Hierarchy of Need helps to explain employee motivation or de-motivation through five categories including, in a pyramid format, physiological or basic needs, security or safety needs, social and esteem needs, and, at the top of the pyramid, self-actualization needs. Herzberg's Motivation Hygiene (Two-Factor) Theory partitions motivational factors into two bins; one of which improves motivation, and one that fails to motivate and simply supports current conditions. Lee and Mitchell's Unfolding Model of Turnover presupposes the theory that employees react to shocks in their employment experience by evaluating their current situation, planning one of four courses of action, and then executing along one of these paths, often leading to voluntary turnover and loss of that employee's experience and productivity.

The researcher determined the contractor workforce geographically located across the various military organizations present on MacDill AFB, along with the accompanying contract management personnel and government contracting professionals would provide a large enough and sufficiently varied population to provide a robust sample for this research project. After interviewing 10 defense contractor line employees, three contractor management personnel, and two government contracting professionals, the data were determined to be sufficiently saturated

to begin analysis. The researcher also identified assumptions, limitations, and delimitations which could impact the validity of the study.

The study's significance was identified as providing a clearer understanding of how recurring contract re-competes potentially impact the contractor workforce in terms of morale, job satisfaction, productivity, and retention. This section concluded with an in-depth literature review examining current business practices as they relate to the identified problem, how concepts and theories can help understand and predict employee behavior, any related studies previously conducted, and what themes had been identified as pre-existing or which could potentially be revealed as the study progressed.

Section 2 focused on the design and execution of the study. Following a discussion of the purpose statement, an in-depth examination of the role of the researcher and the research methodology was undertaken. The rationale behind selection of a case study methodology was explained, including meeting the criteria of studying an issue from a contemporary viewpoint, as was the concern to be investigated here. A qualitative research method was also determined to be the appropriate approach, allowing for the full investigation of a case study approach, with the time boundaries set to the period just prior, during, and after a re-compete, and the population limited to those directly involved in the preparation, execution, and aftermath of the event. The researcher chose to use triangulation as a method of establishing validity and reliability of the case study results.

Due to travel restraints during the pandemic, the researcher opted for non-probability sampling, limiting the population to those geographically available, and suitable to the unique nature of the research questions. Interviews were conducted by telecon only as well, due to pandemic limitations. The data collection, in the form of recorded interviews and field notes,

were transcribed for processing through NVivo software to allow the researcher to develop themes and messages. A semi-structured interview process was chosen to allow participants to focus primarily on the interview questions, ensuring level data capture from all participants, while still allowing free-flowing responses to develop rich narrative details. The researcher also incorporated significant contracting documentation including requests for proposals, bid responses, and statements of work to extent allowed by regulatory frameworks. All data were managed on a central computer with files password protected and identities masked. The researcher utilized standardized templates for interviews and transcripts to ensure reliability, validity, and repeatability, as well as applying bracketing to ensure inherent bias did not creep into study analysis.

Section 3 reveals the results of the study, application to professional practice, and implications for change. After an overview of the study, the presentation of the findings delineated the results of tabulating and analyzing the collected data. Participants were overwhelmingly white, male and older than the general populaces. Only one female was interviewed. This was not a design flaw; it merely reflects the reality of a sample of a population drawn from mostly military retirees of a bygone era where females were not proportionally represented. Most had college degrees, and many had advanced degrees; only two did not have prior military experience. To further explain the impacts of recurring contract re-competes, a deep dive was conducted into the history of one of the thousands of extant government contracts, revealing numerous instances where contracting companies engaged in bad behavior to impact employee wages and benefits, for the most part outside of the re-compete process, and by which companies boosted profit margins at the expense of employee compensation.

The 15 employees, management personnel, and contracting professional offered a wide variety of perspectives on the impacts of the re-compete process. Transcriptions of the interviews resulted in several hundred pages of material, which was then processed through NVivo software to develop themes and messages. Five themes were developed and are summarized as follows:

Theme 1. Contractor productivity and job satisfaction are not widely affected by the re-compete process.

Theme 2. Contractors can and do plan exit strategies when faced with a contract re-compete.

Theme 3. Contractors view compensation and benefits as primary motivators in making retention decisions.

Theme 4. Recurring re-competes can have a profound effect on contractor morale.

Theme 5. While some contractors reported having limited visibility into the re-compete process, most think there must be a better way.

The themes, as developed, were reflective of both the research questions and the coding applied through the NVivo software system. While both were adequate for executing the research design, it became obvious, as themes emerged, that both could have been better targeted. However, that would not have been possible without having first engaged in the research effort, demonstrating a paradox common in research studies. The themes that did emerge painted a picture of a conflicted workforce torn between loyalties to the company, the mission, and self-interest. While issues with morale and job satisfaction were common, and although job satisfaction was impacted to a lesser extent than predicted, there were no reports of decreased productivity, contrary to expectation generated by the concepts examined in earlier sections of the project. Retention was identified as an issue, leading several employees to choose

a pathway to employment elsewhere. The conceptual framework held up well as a model for representing the relationships between the different entities, personnel, and legal frameworks involved in a contract re-compete. The literature review supported the findings as revealed through analysis, and the problem statement remained valid.

The findings illuminated a number of concerns that should be addressed by management personnel and should be considered by government contracting professionals in crafting future requests for proposals, and potentially in altering the mandated recurring contract re-compete requirement. While profitability is vital for companies to remain viable, from the customer's perspective, performance is key, and that requires motivated and dedicated employees, as well as a stable workforce. Companies that fail to retain and motivate employees will eventually create conditions where they are unable to satisfy customer desires, resulting in premature cancellation of the contract or being eliminated during subsequent re-compete cycles. The study revealed a number of areas where companies can improve performance relating to employee motivation and retention. Among those are increased transparency, as allowed by law, during the re-compete process, as well as steps the government can take to reduce turmoil. For example, the government can offer extensions to existing contracts or remove the impediments created by the 8(a) small business requirement on subsequent re-competes. Finally, based on current economic conditions, future contracts might include an escalation clause based on a cost-of-living index, rather than the current practice of setting an arbitrary increase which may or may not be passed on to employees.

Future studies might include comparisons between defense contracting companies and similar service provider companies in the civilian sector. Understanding the perspective of the traditionally younger workforce in comparable civilian industries has the potential to inform the

contractor workforce of the inevitable changes in employee attitudes and perceptions that will become apparent as the next generation of defense contractors age into the military support industry. Failing to do this will only exacerbate the current issues with morale, job satisfaction, productivity, and retention. Change is coming, and preparation and understanding will be key to motivating the next generation of defense contractors, a responsibility that lies with both company management and government contracting professionals, and one that is vital to the well-being of the contractor workforce and by extension, the Department of Defense and the nation.

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Appendix A: Research Approval

August 13, 2021

John Bergmann

Reshowrn Thomas

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY20-21-1057 Government Contract Re-compete Impacts on Employees

Dear John Bergmann, Reshowrn Thomas,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review.

This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:104(d): Category 2.(iii). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:

The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).

Your stamped consent form(s) and final versions of your study documents can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse

IRB. Your stamped consent form(s) should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document(s) should be made available without alteration.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

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

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP

Administrative Chair of Institutional Research

Research Ethics Office

Appendix B: Consent Form***IRB -FY20-21-1057*****Consent Form**

A qualitative study on the impacts of recurring contract re-competes on the defense contractor workforce

A Qualitative Case Study

By

John J. Bergmann
Liberty University
School of Business

You have been selected from among a group of current or former defense contractors to participate in a study examining the impacts of recurring contract re-competes on the defense contractor workforce. Your selection is based on your experience with the contract re-compete process as a defense contractor and your firsthand knowledge of how and why that process might impact employees in terms of morale, productivity, job satisfaction, and retention.

If you are interested in contributing to this study, please read the rest of this form, and ask any questions you might have before agreeing to participate.

This study is being conducted by John Bergmann, a doctoral candidate at Liberty University's School of Business.

Background Information: The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of recurring contract re-competes on the defense contractor workforce.

Procedures: If you are willing to participate in this study, there are several requirements that will need to be met.

- The study will require you to participate in an interview using open-ended questions designed to elicit your experiences during the contract re-compete process. The interview should take 20-30 minutes and will be recorded and transcribed. If required, a follow-up interview will be conducted.
- Once the transcription process has been completed, I would ask that you review the final product for completeness and accuracy.

Risks: There are no additional risk in this study other than those which you are exposed to routinely.

Benefits: This study is not designed to provide direct benefits to participants but may

IRB -FY20-21-1057

provide indirect benefits over time to individuals that remain in the defense contractor community. Participants who are contracted under the auspices of DoD may receive intangible benefits as a result of this study's potential effect on the DoD contracting process.

Compensation: The study does not anticipate providing any compensation for voluntary participation.

Confidentiality: All study materials will be safeguarded until the point when they are no longer needed and can be destroyed. Participants will be assigned a pseudonym, and the data matching pseudonyms to real identities will be password protected and deleted upon study conclusion. If any data from this study is shared in the future, it will be done in a manner that ensures study participant identities are protected. All interviews will be recorded and then transcribed. Recordings will be deleted once the participant has been given the opportunity to review the transcript for accuracy. Any field notes, as well as verified transcripts will be password protected as well.

Voluntary Nature of the Study: All participation in this study is solely on a voluntary basis. Your decision of whether or not to participate in the study will not have any effect on future relationships with other study participants, Liberty University, or the researcher. If you decide to participate in this study, you are free at any time to decline to answer questions or completely withdraw without consequences.

How to Voluntarily Withdraw: If you no longer desire to participate in this study, please contact the researcher utilizing the contact information provided below. Upon receipt of your withdrawal request, any notes, transcripts, or other previously developed materials will be destroyed.

Contacts and Questions: The primary researcher is John Bergmann, who can be reached at jbergmann1@liberty.edu. This is your primary contact for any questions about this research project. The dissertation chair is Dr. Reshowrn Thomas, who can be reached at xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx@liberty.edu. For any other questions, you may contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Green Hall Ste 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email the IRB at irb@liberty.edu.

If you would like a copy of this document for your records, please advise the researcher and one will be provided.

Statement of Consent: I, the undersigned, have fully read and understand the provided information. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction. My signature indicates consent to participate in this study.

- As a condition of my consent, I have given the researcher permission to record our question-and-answer session. I understand I will be given an opportunity to review a transcript of that session.

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Researcher

Date

Appendix C: Recruitment Letter

Dear XXX

XX XXX 2021

As a part of my doctoral studies, I am conducting a research project focusing on the impact of recurring contract re-competes on the defense contractor workforce. The results of my study may potentially affect how contract negotiations are pursued in the future amid the reality of declining defense budgets.

The purpose of this letter is to issue you an invitation to participate in this study.

The study is aimed at defense contractors, management, and contracting personnel that have previously experienced a contract re-compete. If you express a willingness to contribute to the study, you will be asked to participate in an interview process, most likely over the telephone (due to the pandemic). After we have completed the interview, and I have transcribed it, you will be given an opportunity to review it and offer any corrections. The whole process should only require about an hour of your time.

While I will record your name to associate with your transcript, it will only be stored in a password protected data base, and all data within the project will be reported anonymously.

If you are interested in assisting with this project, please respond by email. I will need you to be frank and honest with your replies to my questions to ensure the study captures accurate reflections about the impacts of the re-compete process on the contractor workforce. If you indicate a willingness to participate, I will respond within the next week to set up an interview time. I will also provide a consent form to review and sign prior to the interview.

I appreciate your time and willingness to assist me in my academic endeavors.

Sincerely,

John J. Bergmann

Appendix D: Interview Guide and Questions

Pre-interview Checklist and Interview Guide

- Create and password protect a file for each participant on secured computer system
- Within 24 hours of scheduled interview block, ensure the time, place, manner, and location of the interview is validated. Assign a pseudonym to each participant to ensure confidentiality is maintained.
- Immediately prior to interview, ensure speaker phone is operable (due to pandemic restrictions, it is anticipated interviews will be done by telecon). Check digital recorder and ensure spare power supply is available. Supply notepad for field notes.
- Before starting each interview, review interview questions and any previously acquired data about participants.

Read the following script to each participant:

My name is John Bergmann and I am currently pursuing a Doctorate of Business Administration through Liberty University. For my dissertation research, I have chosen to study the potential impacts of recurring contract re-competes on defense contractors. As you have been identified as someone who has undergone one or more contract re-competes, your inputs can help me to better understand the significance of these types of events. The results of my research may help to ensure future contract re-competes take into account the impacts they have on the defense contractor workforce. The period I am interested in more fully investigating covers the time immediately preceding and following a contract re-compete.

The purpose of this interview is to capture your thoughts on how and why contract re-competes may have affected your performance, morale, job satisfaction, and potentially, retention. I will read each question aloud to you, and then offer you an opportunity to respond. The interview will be taped and then transcribed, to ensure I have accurately captured your thoughts. You will be given an opportunity to review the transcription for accuracy. I will retain these transcripts for a period of three years, after which they will be destroyed. Transcripts and any notes I take during the interview will be kept strictly confidential. All participants will be identified by pseudonym only, and the key to that identification will be password protected.

Proposed Preliminary Interview Questions:

1. Have you had an opportunity to read, comprehend, and sign the consent form

Yes=Proceed No=Conclude interview

2. Is there anything you did not understand or need clarification on?

Yes=Provide clarification No=Proceed with interview

3. Would you like the opportunity to review the transcript of this interview prior to it being finalized and utilized for research purposes?

Yes=Proceed No=Resolve issues or terminate interview

At this point we are going to proceed to the interview questions. There are no trick questions or right or wrong answers. My only goal is for you to provide me with the data I need to complete my research. Feel free to ask for clarification at any time. We can terminate this interview at any time if you no longer wish to continue.

Proposed Main Interview Questions

1. What has been your experiences, as a defense contractor, with contract re-competes?
 - 1.a. Have you found this to be a stressful event, or one that has little or no impact on you personally, and why do you believe this is so?
 - 1.b. How do you view the amount of information you receive from your company or the government during the re-compete process?
2. Based on your perception of the re-compete process, has it ever affected your desire to remain with your current company in your current position, and if so, why?
 - 2.a. If the re-compete process impacted your retention with your current employer at the time of the re-compete, how did you respond?
 - 2.b. Have you ever sought alternative employment opportunities as the result of a contract re-compete, and if so, what were the results?
3. Has a contract re-compete ever affected your productivity at work, positively or negatively, and if so, how did you respond?

- 3.a. If there were impacts on your productivity, were they more pronounced before or after the re-compete bid process was completed, and why do you think this occurred?
- 3.b. When and why did your productivity return to a normal level, if it had changed at all?
4. What, if any, increases or decreases in job satisfaction or morale have you noticed during the re-compete process?
 - 4.a. If your job satisfaction or morale was impacted by the re-compete process, can you provide any examples of how that affected you?
 - 4.b. Do you have any additional comments on how or why your morale was impacted, or why the process did not affect you personally?
5. Are there any additional issues dealing with contract re-competes that we have not touched on you feel would provide additional insight to this issue?

Proposed Interview Questions for Management

1. How do you believe recurring contract re-competes affect your defense contractor personnel?
 - 1.a. How well do you think employees are kept abreast of contract negotiations?
 - 1.b. How has your company ensured your employees have enough data to make informed decisions about continued employment with your company?
2. How does the re-compete process impact employees in ways that are visible to management personnel?
 - 2.a. Do you have any example of how a re-compete might positively or negatively affect employee morale?

- 2.b. Has the re-compete process manifested itself in any employee behaviors, such as decreased productivity, and if so, how is that addressed?
- 2.c. What, if any behaviors have your employees demonstrated during a re-compete that would indicate a loss of job satisfaction or decreased morale?
3. How do you think the DoD could improve the contract re-compete process to provide more transparency and decrease any potential negative consequences to the defense contractor workforce?
- 3.a. What concerns, if any, have contractor personnel voiced to you during the contract re-compete period?

Proposed Interview Questions for DoD Contracting Personnel

1. Have you seen any evidence that the current process of contract re-competes negatively impacts the contractor workforce in terms of productivity, morale, retention, and job satisfaction?
2. What do you see as the potential for the contract bidding process moving from the current best value proposition to a more low-bid type process?
- 2.a. If the process does move towards the low-bid type of contract award, how do you think that will affect contractors?

I would like to thank you for providing the time to answer my questions and support my research project. Do you have any additional questions or comments before we wrap this up? *Yes=Clarify or answer participant questions No=Conclude the interview*

This concludes the interview.”

Research Questions

RQ1: What are the experiences of DoD contractors who must undergo contract re-competes every 5 years?

RQ2: In what ways and why do contract re-competes affect employee morale and job satisfaction?

- RQ2a: How and why do contract re-competes influence worker productivity?
- RQ2b: In what ways might re-competes have a significant impact on employee turnover?

RQ3: Why does the Department of Defense require periodic contract re-competes despite the potential negative impacts on the contractor workforce?

- RQ3a: What factors might contribute to any negative impacts that might be incurred by the contractor workforce, and if so, how could those factors be mitigated?